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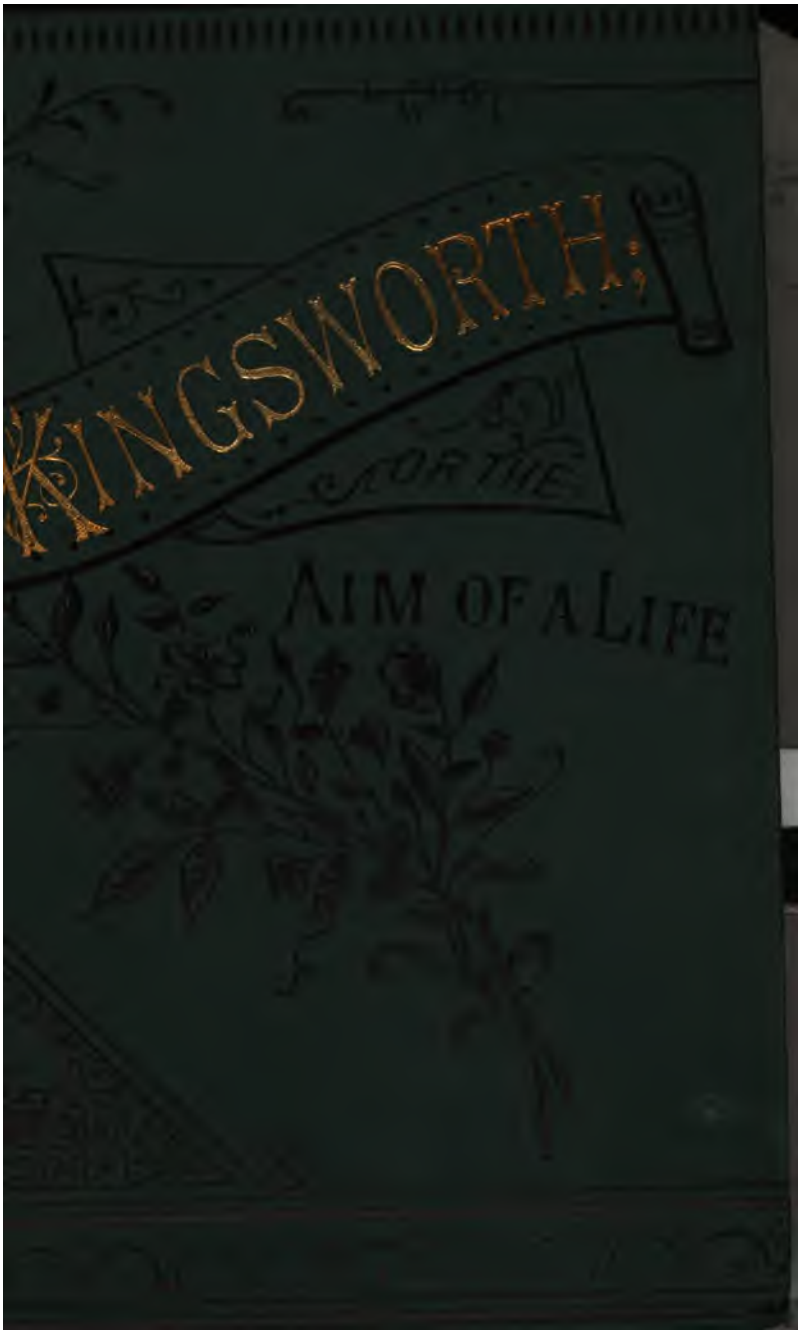
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KINGSWORTH;
OR THE
AIM OF A LIFE


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OR, THE AIM OF A LIFE.



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OR, THE AIM OF A LIFE.

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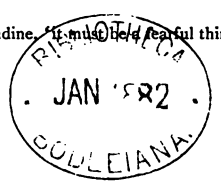
C. R. COLERIDGE,

AUTHOR OF

"LADY BETTY," "HANBURY MILLS," "HUGH CRICHTON'S ROMANCE,"

ETC.

"'Oh,' said Undine, 'it must be a fearful thing to have a soul.'"



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KINGSWORTH;

OR, THE AIM OF A LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

THE HEIRS OF KINGSWORTH.

KINGSWORTH was a moderate-sized old-fashioned house, standing amid bare undulating downs above a low line of chalky cliffs and looking over the sea. It was enclosed in a piece of barren down, which young half-grown trees were struggling to turn into a park—trees that the wind blew all in one direction, and forced into strange shapes and attitudes. Almost on the edge of the cliff was a bit of ruined tower, and down below the slope of the park and sheltered by the hill from the wind was a little village, untidy rather than picturesque.

The rooms in Kingsworth House were small and dark; the situation, save in sparkling sunshine, was bleak and dreary; yet its possession had been the aim of a whole

life's work—and would be a matter of infinite importance to those whose fortunes these pages are intended to follow.

Kingsworth House had once been Kingsworth Castle, when the ruined tower had been whole and inhabited, and the family traditions were both ancient and honourable. But early in the 18th century, between political changes and personal extravagance Walter Kingsworth was ruined, and the family place sold to a stranger. He left two sons, who set to work in various ways to earn their living. The younger went into trade; in due time his family made their fortune, and his grandson fulfilled a long-standing ambition and bought back the family place. Their old house had been pulled down and the present one built by the intermediate owners; but the Kingsworths of Kingsworth came back very naturally to their place in the county, the rich merchant's son closed his connection with the business that had made his father's fortune—and the two young men, the purchaser's grandsons, who were lounging about in the little dark library one windy sunny March morning, had no thought but that their family place was an inalienable inheritance.

With the elder branch of the Kingsworths they had only a little occasional intercourse, as these were settled far away in the North at a place called Silthorpe, where they were solicitors of good standing, and with a large business. The Kingsworths were fair fresh-coloured people, with dark eyes and aquiline noses. They were slightly made and mostly of middle height, and were proud of their resemblance to the family type. James,

the elder of those two brothers, was the handsomer, and George the more thoughtful looking of the two. He was writing a letter; while his brother, turning over the newspaper, looking out of window, and idly stirring the fire, seemed rather at a loss for some amusement.

"I declare, George," he said, presently, "I am lost in admiration of your good luck."

"Well," said George, good-humouredly, "if you think I am lucky I am the last person to deny it. I am—successful."

"That *you* should have succeeded in engaging yourself to an heiress! a lady, and a very handsome girl into the bargain. Why—if *I* could have done such a thing, *then* I should have won pardon for all my offences, retrieved my character for good sense, got my debts paid—"

"With the heiress's money?"

"No, no, don't you suppose my father would pay them twenty times over if I had done such a clever thing as to get engaged to Miss Lacy?"

"You don't seem to give my father much reason to think there is any use in paying them," said George, gravely.

James shrugged his shoulders, then said abruptly, "Where shall you live after your marriage?"

"I believe," returned George, as he sealed his letter, "that my father, feeling the want of a mistress to his house, is very anxious that we should live here. Mary would be like a daughter to him."

James' brow darkened. "I don't think I like that

arrangement," he said shortly. "I should find myself *de trop.*"

"Well, James," said the younger brother, "I should think that you would find your visits at home much more comfortable if you were not tête-à-tête with my father."

"Perhaps. But I thought I had heard something of a government appointment?"

"Yes," said George, with some hesitation. "But my father needs some one to help him in all the business of the estate, and he offers me a sort of agency of it. Don't be angry, Jem, I can assure you that your interests shall in no way suffer."

"I suppose my father wouldn't trust *me.*"

"Well—do you think he could?"

James Kingsworth started up at this unanswerable question, and walked over to the window. Alas, there was a long story of extravagance and disobedience, there had been evidence of fatal weakness of character, and of culpable indifference to the father's wishes and feelings, before things had come to their present pass. Who could blame the father who had been so deeply disappointed in his elder son, if he turned for support to the younger one? who could blame George because he did not share in his brother's well deserved disgrace?

James Kingsworth was ordinarily callous and indifferent to the pain his transgressions caused to others, nor would he ever confess to the suffering they must frequently have caused himself. Now, however, he was evidently hit hard, the step his father had taken showed him how entirely his respect was forfeited; and though

the brothers had never been otherwise than friendly, there was a gleam of distrust in James' eyes, which George felt to be unjustifiable. Had he not often smoothed over difficulties, and prevented useless explanations that could only lead to passionate scenes between the father and the son? For what a cruel disappointment this eldest born had been to the ambitious man who had shared so earnestly in *his* father's desire to reinstate their family in their ancient honour and high place!

Nothing more passed between the brothers. They were cool-tempered people and rarely came to words. George was too fortunate, too sure of himself, and too happy in his bright prospects to waste anger on his brother, and James had that kind of nonchalance which is a very bad imitation of a forgiving nature.

He strolled out now into the March sunshine and looked about him. He was supposed to dislike Kingsworth, and annoyed his father frequently, by complaints of the cold wind, and the bleak downs, the old-fashioned house, and the general inferiority of the estate. Now he looked round at the chalky downs, the sparkling water, the pale blue sky, and wished, rather vaguely, perhaps, that his way lay clearer to the peaceful useful life proper to its owner. He had constantly refused to take any interest in the management of the estate, but none the better did he like that his brother should be in any sense the master of it.

Mr. Kingsworth, however, was a man who pursued his own course, consulting nobody, and the arrangement was

made. James was to receive his usual allowance, and George was to assist his father in the management of the estate.

"Provided," Mr. Kingsworth said punctiliously, "that the young lady whom he had chosen had no objection to make to the proposal."

Mary Lacy was a tall, dark-eyed girl, graceful and distinguished, with a cultivated mind and strong enthusiastic temper.

George went to see her, and told her of the plan proposed. Their home, he said, "had been lonely since their mother's death, and his father required both her presence within the house, and his assistance about the estate."

Miss Lacy listened, thoughtfully. "You think we are so much wanted as to make this a duty?" she said.

"Don't you like the notion, Mary?" said George, surprised.

"I should like it very much," said Mary, with clear directness, "if you were the eldest and the heir. But as it is, I think I want you to make a career for yourself. But oh, George, I am ashamed of being so selfish and worldly-minded. Of course we must do it if your father wants us. And, don't you think, don't you think, George, that if Kingsworth was very bright and cheerful, it would be better for your brother too?"

"I am quite sure that every one will be the better for having you there, my dearest!"

"I will try, I will try my very best to have it so," said Mary, earnestly.

What better could she wish than to help her husband to sacrifice his natural desire for an independent career to his father's need? she would be wealthy, and her marriage settlements were to be handsome, there was no difficulty on that score, but she was ambitious enough to feel that the choice was a sacrifice, and enthusiastic enough to glory in being able to think of George as a hero, worthy of the good old Kingsworth name. So when the honeymoon was over, the bride came home, a young light-hearted creature, spite of her lofty carriage and shy manners, ready to love and respect her new relations, and with a specially kind thought, and as kind a look as her bashfulness permitted for James, who was to be helped to reform by his good brother, and reinstated in his father's favour.

James admired her very much. As he said, he could not have the luck to fix his affections on so undeniable an object. He had a very different ideal in his mind. What would his father say to the pretty penniless nursery governess, who had won his affections? He did not care what his father *said*, but he did care for what his father did, and a vague idea crossed his mind that his new sister-in-law might be a kind and generous ally.

She, on her side, felt that in setting these family disturbances right, she would find an object worthy of all her energies, and one only to be accomplished by herself living up to the strong Church principles and religious motives which, adopted perhaps as a matter of taste or education, were now to be tested by the trials of real life.



CHAPTER II.

THE READING OF THE WILL.

MRS. George Kingsworth had reigned for a year over Kingsworth House, her father-in-law had grown very fond of her, and the estate had prospered under George's management. But James scarcely ever came home, and was no nearer than before to his father's favour. Mr. Kingsworth, though not old, was much broken in health, and it was not surprising that he should lean much on the son who was close at hand.

So mused the young wife as she sat in a little breakfast room in the second autumn after her marriage; her little four months old daughter on her knee. Her face had grown much graver and sterner since her wedding day, and she was only half attending to her lively cooing baby, as if her thoughts were not free to take pleasure in it.

"I don't think George need have shown that angry letter to his father," she thought, "what good could it do any one? I suppose such faults as James's do seem intolerable to a person like George. They *are* horrible."

As these thoughts passed through her mind, her hus-

band came into the room. He looked serious, said something about the weather, touched the baby's cheek with his finger, and at length observed, "Well, I am afraid poor James has done for himself at last!"

"How, what has happened?" said Mary, in alarm.

"They say a man is never ruined till he is married!"

"Married? Has he written to say so? Did you know anything about it?"

"He has not written, but my uncle has picked up a report, which he heard from Mr. Hatton, that James has been married for some time. Of course if he had made a particularly creditable choice there would be no occasion for secresy. We have heard less than usual of him lately."

"Do you know, can you guess at all who it is, George?"

"Well, I'm not sure, I think I can form a notion."

"Is it so very bad?"

"Quite a low connection, they say, not at all what my father would like, of course. But I can't undertake to answer for James, I don't *know* anything about it."

"What shall you do? Oh, George, don't you think it might be made a turning point? If James would write to your father and tell him all."

"I shall write and advise him to make a clean breast of it; but he has offended my father over and over again: and at last, people must take the consequences of their actions."

Mrs. George heard nothing more of the correspondence that ensued, she was not in the habit of hearing much of the family affairs; and being clever, and with strong clear

opinions as to what was right and good, she would have liked to receive a little more confidence, and to have known the meaning of the lawyer's visits which just at that time were frequent. She could not forget these matters in the fact that her little Katharine had cut two teeth, or leave them in utter trust to her husband's judgment.

Whatever playful companionship or constant caresses the baby missed in her mother, was supplied by a young nursemaid named Alice Taylor, a merry, laughing, black-eyed girl, who was devoted to the baby, and so thought well of by her mistress, but who was not approved of by the other servants, among whom she had made no secret of her preference for the lively complimentary Mr. James over the very grave and silent young master now in command.

The old housekeeper put forth a hint that Alice was "flighty," and her mistress was meditating a little improving conversation, when this as well as all other considerations were put out of her mind by the dangerous illness of her father-in-law.

The illness was very sudden and very short, and before his son and his brother could reach Kingsworth all was over. This brother was a clergyman of some reputation, and had recently been appointed to a canonry of Fanchester, the cathedral town of the county in which Kingsworth was situated. His presence was a great comfort and help, especially to Mrs. Kingsworth, who was very fond of him. James did not arrive till the day before the funeral; the letter had followed him abroad,

he said, and had been delayed. He was shocked and subdued, and George was very busy, so that there was not much opportunity of conversation between them; but late in the evening as Mary was sitting in the drawing-room by herself, James came in and said with hesitation,

"Mary, you have always been a very kind sister to me: I wonder if you will be equally kind to—my wife?"

"Oh, James, I hope so!" she said, with sudden colour. "But won't you tell me something about her?"

"Hasn't George told you? Didn't you know I was married?" he said quickly.

"Yes, but—"

Poor Mrs. Kingsworth stammered and hesitated, but James went on in a half joking tone which yet had an under current of appeal in it.

"I don't see why my father should object. I assure you it's a chance for me! But ah, I forgot. *Was* he very violent, Mary, when he understood all about it?"

"I don't know, George did not tell me. I should like to hear all about her."

"I have written to George. Of course it's not a good match, but she is very respectably connected. Her mother keeps a school and she was a governess. I knew nothing that I did would be well received at home, and so I said nothing about my marriage."

"What is her name?" asked Mary.

"Ellen; her name was Ellen Bury. But you know, Mary, it's much too late to make a fuss about it all, because I was married soon after you were, and my baby is nearly as old as yours."

"Oh, James, how could you keep the secret for such a long time?"

"Well, there seemed no favourable opportunity, and I thought if the child had been a boy I would have spoken then. Besides I think George must have guessed about it. He had heard of Ellen before."

"It is a little girl then?"

"Yes; Emberance, a family name, you know. She's a very jolly little thing. One puts off things, no doubt it was wrong. I wish I *had* told my poor father myself. But now you see, Mary, when my wife comes here it will make all the difference to her to have a friend in the family. I don't want anything to be said till after to-morrow, but I thought I would talk to you."

"I am sorry you kept it secret," she said, "that was not fair on your wife. But I will always be friendly to her. I think she ought to come here, and that everything should be explained as soon as possible."

"Yes, but don't say anything to George, to-night. I want to talk it all over with him myself. Here's my uncle!"

Mrs. Kingsworth was a good deal impressed with the softening of James' tone and manner. She pitied him greatly for not having been able to receive his father's forgiveness; and never having expected a very elevated line of conduct from him, she was less shocked at the concealment than might have been supposed.

In her own mind she passed a resolution that however uncongenial James' wife might prove to her, she would always give her her due, and act towards her with kindness and consideration.

Some thoughts she gave to the fact that Kingsworth was her home no longer; but they were hardly thoughts of regret, she had never loved it, and she felt glad that she and her husband were free now to form a home for themselves. There would be no lack of means, she knew that George would not be left unprovided for by his father, and she herself was rich. She would not say even to herself how her heart leapt at the thought of freedom from the toils, tangles, and temptations of Kingsworth.

The funeral took place early in the day, quietly, for the Kingsworths were not people given to much display. The weather was dark and dreary, a thick sea-mist blotting everything out of sight, and adding to the mournfulness of the occasion.

When they came back from church, Mrs. Kingsworth ran hastily up to the nursery to find some cheering in the sight of her child. She opened the door on a scene that she little expected. Instead of decorous silence, or subdued comments, a confusion of angry voices met her ear, and the head nurse, a very grand personage, of whose experience her mistress herself stood somewhat in awe, turned round at her entrance.

"Indeed, ma'am, you will be surprised and grieved at what you see. It is disgraceful at such a time as this. Nor should I have spoken till to-morrow, if you hadn't happened to open the door."

"But what is it? what is the matter?" said Mrs. Kingsworth, perceiving the pretty Alice sobbing and protesting, while two or three other servants were standing round.

"Your earrings, ma'am, that were missing the other day. When I came back not five minutes ago, I found Alice looking in her workbox, she dropped it when I opened the door, and out rolled the earrings on the floor. It's not the first time I've suspected her."

"I never touched the earrings," sobbed Alice, "never. I believe she put 'em in my box herself! she's always been against me."

"Alice!" said her mistress, "that is not the way to speak. It is impossible to inquire into the matter now. It must wait till to-morrow."

"I won't stay here to be suspected, I'll go away this moment," said Alice.

"That's not for you to choose," said the nurse. "Suppose my mistress sends for the police."

"No, no," said Mrs. Kingsworth, "not that. But I am grieved that you should attempt to deny what seems so plain a fact. I will pay you your wages and you had better go at once. It is not fitting to have a discussion now. I will come and see you."

Perhaps Mrs. Kingsworth hardly knew how stern her sad face and voice sounded. In truth, though she had forgotten her earrings in the shock of her father-in-law's illness, she had been much perplexed at their loss, and various circumstances had seemed to point suspicion at Alice.

The scene ended by such an outburst of violent and unrestrained passion from the girl, as prejudiced every one still further against her, and Mrs. Kingsworth withdrew with her sobs and declarations that she would make

them all suffer for falsely accusing her, still ringing in her ears. Mrs. Kingsworth went down into the library, and before she left the room she had forgotten Alice and the earrings as completely as if they had never existed: for she heard her father-in-law's will read, and in the reading of that will the whole face of life was changed to her.

Neither brother looked at ease as they prepared to listen. James was oppressed with the weight of his secret, and perhaps with the sense of his many sins against his father. George changed colour and manifestly listened with eagerness.

The will was accompanied by a statement written in Mr. Kingsworth's own hand. After speaking of his father's purchase of the old house, and of his own pride in coming into possession of it, and his desire to re-establish the family fortunes, there was a very stern and unsoftened repetition of all James' misdemeanours, and of their frequent forgiveness, of the sums of money that had been paid for him, and of how they had impoverished the estate. He had long known that the object of himself and his father would be undone by his son, had long hesitated as to the disposition of his property, but now understanding, that in addition to all these causes of displeasure James had contracted secretly a marriage of a discreditable kind, he must take the consequences of his actions, and see his father's estate left to one who in every way deserved it.

Accordingly the will, executed only a fortnight before Mr. Kingsworth's death, left his whole property to his second son, and disinherited James altogether.

There was a moment's blank silence, then James started up.

"But my letter—my letter that I wrote to you, George? I sent you a full explanation to lay before my father. Where is it? Why did he not receive it?"

"I did not find an opportunity," said George slowly. "While he was unfavourably disposed, it would have been useless."

"You did not find—you did not make one," cried James passionately; "I deserved something of this, but my father never would have acted with such cruelty, had he read that letter. You told me it was better to make *you* the channel of approach—besides, you must have known—you could have guessed at first the rights of the story."

"It is natural that you should be angry—" began George.

"Natural! yes indeed! Did you not tell me that you endeavoured to soften my father's anger. Didn't you promise that he should know the efforts I was making?"

"Hush, James!" interposed the Canon; "you must allow George to speak. This thing is done and cannot be undone, for there is no question either of my brother's ability or of his right to make his will, when this statement was written."

There was a moment's pause, then George said, "I have nothing to say. It is impossible to reply to my brother's insinuations."

"You had better produce James' letter now," said

the Canon, "that there may be no further misunderstanding."

"I—I was about to say," said George, "that most unfortunately, the letter is mislaid; otherwise I might have found an opportunity—Mary, you do not recollect seeing such a letter?"

"No, George, you never showed it to me, nor told me you had received it," she said, in a hard clear voice that startled them all.

"I think," said the Canon, with decision, "that we had better separate; no good can be attained by further discussion now. If you will come with me, James, I shall be glad to hear all the particulars of your marriage."

James had not perhaps so fully realised the situation as to feel the full force of his anger against his brother. He followed his uncle, and the family solicitor, who had been present at the reading of the will, took leave, saying that he should call again on the next day, when matters were more ripe for discussion.

The door closed behind him, and the husband and wife were left alone.

She had remained in her seat by the fire, silent except when appealed to, through the whole interview. Now she sprang up and ran to him, laying her hands on his, and looking right into his eyes, with a passionate appeal in her own.

"George, we can give it back to him," she said, breathlessly.

"My dear Mary," said George, turning his head away,

"don't be so unreasonable: James has forfeited it over and over again. This is better for him and for all of us."

"But the letter—"

"Surely, Mary, you do not mean to join with those who insult me by such a suspicion," cried George, angrily.

She looked right into his face, then turned away and burst into an agony of weeping, and George, anxious to think the matter well over, left her alone to recover herself.

CHAPTER III.

FOUND DROWNED.

MRS. Kingsworth remained near the library fire by herself. Her tears soon ceased, and she sat still and silent, in the grasp of a conviction from which she could not free herself. Every word that George had said might be true, and yet she knew, she felt that all his wishes had worked in his own favour, that a "covetous desire" had been granted perhaps even in spite of weak and inadequate words and actions telling the other way. An intense feeling of shame seized on her. What in all the world, she thought, was worth the loss of self-respect? She heard, without heeding, loud and angry voices, and the sudden shutting of the front door; but she never moved till Canon Kingsworth came into the room.

"Well," he said, "James has told me the whole story. It was very foolish, he had no right to marry in the relations in which he stood towards his father; but the whole thing has been much misrepresented. I take blame to myself for my hasty account of it."

"It ought to be set right," said Mrs. Kingsworth, steadily.

"Set right? do you mean reverse the will? Ah, my dear, that is impossible: but I think that though my brother might in any case have made the same will in the main, had he known the facts, he would not have left James penniless."

"He would not have made any new will at all, but for that false report," said Mrs. Kingsworth. Her tone was so marked and so miserable that Canon Kingsworth turned away from the subject at once.

"I shall take an opportunity of talking to George," he said, "to-morrow, when our minds are quieter. I am very anxious to avoid further discussion to-night. James is very angry, and I am afraid unforgetable words passed as he went out."

"Has he gone out?"

"Yes; I think George did so too, afterwards."

Mrs. Kingsworth sat on by the fire, she felt no impulse to move, to talk the matter over, or to try to gain any new lights upon it. She was absolutely silent; while the Canon took up a book from the table, and read, or feigned to read it, till the butler looked in and said, "Will the gentlemen be in to dinner, ma'am?"

"To dinner? Is it dinner-time? Are they still out? Oh yes, we will wait for them."

They waited, till the Canon grew impatient, and went to look out of the window.

"Why, there is a dense fog," he said, "what can induce either of them to stay out in it?"

Mrs. Kingsworth roused herself with a start. "It is close upon eight o'clock," she said, "what can keep them?"

"The fog is thick enough to make them lose their way. I'll have the dinner bell rung outside the door."

They hardly knew how impatience gradually melted into uneasiness, and uneasiness into alarm; but before the next two hours were over, every man-servant in the place was shouting and searching, ringing the great bell in every direction, losing themselves and each other in the blinding mist, and with one conviction growing stronger every moment in their minds.

"The cliffs!" That whisper was in every one's mind long before it found its way to their lips; but the first sound of it terrified Mrs. Kingsworth almost out of her senses. She had been very slow to take alarm; but her fears once excited, all hope was gone from her. As for the Canon, he instituted every possible search and said nothing; but his mind was filled with terrible possibilities, which he would not put into words.

The night passed in perplexity and alarm, and even the dawn brought no relief; for the heavy sea-fog still hung thick over the cliffs and the shore; till, suddenly, as it seemed almost in a moment, it rolled back and left the white cliffs and the glittering waves bright in the morning sun.

The tide was low, and on the beach beneath the cliffs were found the bodies of James and George Kingsworth, clasped in each other's arms as if each had tried to

rescue the other, or— But there was nothing to justify any other interpretation.

From the moment when James' passionate words to his brother as he hurried out of the house had been dimly overheard in the hall, till the bodies were found on the beach, nothing was known of him. George had gone out a few minutes later, with a cigar, quietly and by himself.

They had gone out into the mist and darkness, and mist and darkness hung impenetrably over their memories.

Among all the painful duties that devolved upon Canon Kingsworth that of disclosing what had passed to James' wife weighed on him by far the most heavily.

It was due to her that the family should now recognise her claims. She had, according to James' story, been living at Dinan, and there the Canon went to fetch her, leaving the other poor young widow in a strange state of silent stunned grief. As soon as might be he returned, bringing Mrs. James Kingsworth and her baby with him. She was a pretty young woman, and her reception of him before she knew the sad news he had come to tell had impressed him favourably; but now she was in a state of anger and half-realised grief, speaking of James as if he had been in all respects perfection in her eyes, and only now and then rousing herself from her distress, to remember that her child was disinherited. Canon Kingsworth was very glad to see her safely in her room and under charge of the housekeeper, and as he turned

into the library to consider the situation, his other niece stood before him, with a letter in her hand.

"Uncle, I have found it. Here is James' letter. I found it in the writing-case George always used. Now there is but one thing to be done. My baby shall not profit by this injustice. Let James' child take it all. It is not Katharine's."

"Hush, you do not know what you are saying. Let me look at the letter."

He glanced it over, and said gravely, "Yes, it concurs in all respects with what James told me. Mary, it is impossible now to judge. The past must be laid to rest. The will is valid, and secures this property to your child. Nothing that you can do can alter it. Some provision it is no doubt necessary should be made for James' daughter out of the estate, and I need not ask you to show kindness to one as bitterly afflicted as yourself."

"It is a burden that I cannot bear," she said, passionately. "How can Katharine prosper under it! At least there must be full confession."

"Stop, Mary, what is it that you want to confess? Remember you *know* nothing."

"I know that Mr. Kingsworth did not get that letter. I know that my child has her cousin's right. If he—if George had no *time* to do justice, I must do it for him."

"Recognise and receive her kindly, that is the first thing to do."

That was a strange interview between the two young widows, widowed so suddenly and so recently, that

neither bore any token in her dress of her condition—both suffering under the same loss; both with the same comfort left to them.

Mary approached with reverence for her sister-in-law's grief, with a sense, keen in her soul, of standing in her place—but the other was shy and hard; till the mention of her husband's name broke down her reserve, and she sobbed out her misery at his loss, in such evident ignorance of his character and himself, that any attempt to explain the state of the case, any apology offered, only seemed an additional injury. Mary made her statement, notwithstanding all the tears with which it was met.

"This letter was not given to our father-in-law. He never knew the truth about your marriage. I can but ask you to forgive," she said, with a bitter proud humility. "I am afraid that your husband's errors were not put in the best light before his father."

"My husband's errors! How dare any one say he had errors! If he had, I will never hear a whisper of them *now!* now that I have lost him," sobbed Ellen Kingsworth, while Mary stood silenced by a view of wifely duty so unlike her own.

Ellen turned away from her with manifest suspicion and dislike, and Mary having relieved her conscience was too much absorbed in her own shame and dread—in the terrible fear of she knew not what, to show sufficient tenderness to overcome the repulsion.

In a day or two, however, Mrs. James Kingsworth's mother, Mrs. Bury, arrived on the scene: a gentle ladylike woman, who had worked hard at school-keeping for

her living, and who avowed that her daughter's secret marriage had been made without her knowledge, and afterwards concealed greatly against her will.

She expressed much less surprise than Ellen had done at the disinheritance of her son-in-law, of whom she evidently had formed no good opinion, refused at first with some quiet pride the offers of assistance for Emberance's education, saying that she and her daughter were far from being unable to support her; but perceiving how earnestly and sincerely the Kingsworths wished to make this arrangement, she replied that it was an acknowledgment of her daughter's position, and as such she accepted the allowance offered—a small one—for the affairs of Kingsworth had been much hampered by James' debts. Katharine Kingsworth must owe to her long minority, or to her mother's wealth, the means of supporting her inheritance.

These matters settled, and the sad double funeral over, Mrs. James Kingsworth and her mother and child went away from Kingsworth, doubtless with much sense of injury and disappointment; while Mary was left, feeling as if a burden had been laid upon her, that would crush the brightness out of her life for ever—the brightness, not the energy nor the resolution. She looked forward through the years, and set one aim before her—to undo the injustice which she believed her husband to have done, and to free her child from her unlawful possessions.

How she succeeded, the sequel will tell.

CHAPTER IV.

APPLEHURST.

DOWN in a valley from which the softly outlined, richly wooded hills sloped away on every side, shut out by copse and orchard from church and village, lay an old red-brick house. High walls closed in its gardens, and within and without them the fruit trees bloomed and bore as the seasons came round. The ruddy moss-grown walls and the house itself shone white and radiant with spring blossoms, or supported the richly coloured freight of autumn fruit, while the copse woods and the orchards surged away over the hills, and never a roof or spire broke their solitude. The very road that led to the iron gate, so rarely opened, was noiseless and grass-grown; the soft moss gathered on the garden paths, spite of their trim keeping; in the high summer, even the birds were silent. Year by year the same flowers either grew up or were planted in the quaintly cut beds; year by year the fruit dropped on the ground, and was picked up lest it should be an eyesore, not because any one wanted it for profit or for plea-

sure. Never elsewhere did the trees bend beneath such a weight of fruitage, surely no other roses and clematis flowered so profusely, no other turf was so soft and green, as if no strange foot ever trod it, no rough hand ever came near to pluck the brilliant blossoms. The scream of a railway whistle, even the roll of a carriage hardly ever disturbed the silence; the stock-doves cooed, and the starlings cried unstartled by any passing footsteps. The gardeners, moving deliberately to and fro, seemed too leisurable to disturb the feeling of quiet.

Suddenly, between the hanging creepers, a side door opened, and a girl darted hastily out, ran across the soft turf, and began to pace up and down the broad walks beneath the sunny fruit-laden walls, with rapid impatient steps.

She spoilt the picture. This was no dreamy maiden, idle and peaceful, to complete the charm of the garden scene; but a creature impatient and incongruous, evidently suffering under an access of temper or of trouble, probably of both, for she snatched off a twig as she passed and pulled it in pieces, and her bright hazel eyes were full of angry tears.

She was small and rather short, with the sort of bird-like air, always given by a delicately hooked nose, and round dark eyes set rather close together. Her hair of a reddish chestnut was crisp and rough, her skin brilliantly fair and rosy, and her teeth white, and just perceptible beneath the short upper lip. A pretty healthy face, but fierce, restless, and haughty.

"Oh, how I hate it! I wish—I wish—There it is, I

don't know what to wish for—except an earthquake that would knock the place to bits. I will not bear it a day longer—"

"Miss Kitty, here are some nice ripe peaches, should you like to eat a few," said the old gardener, approaching her, "or a Jargonelle pear?"

"I'm tired of pears and peaches!" said the girl ungraciously; "what is the good of so much fruit?"

"There's some lavender ready to cut, Miss Katharine, then,—young ladies like to be doing something."

"I'll tell you what I'll do then, Dickson," said Katharine, "just leave that ladder against the wall, and I'll climb up and look *over*,—perhaps I could see the church spire, or a waggon,—or a new cow. That would be something."

"La! missy,—young ladies shouldn't climb ladders!"

"You never were a young lady, Dickson," said Katharine, laughing, while her foot still twitched impatiently.

"La! no, Miss Katharine, that I never was,—I've been man and boy this seventy year."

"Then you don't know how much nicer it is to be anything else!" said Katharine. "But the peaches *are* nice, thank you," she added, taking one, "though this place is to life, what peaches are to roast mutton—cloying."

She laughed again as she spoke, subsiding into the ordinary discontent of a well accustomed grievance. For it was no new thing for Katharine Kingsworth to wish herself anywhere but at Applehurst. Had she known how good a right she had to another home and to other

interests, she might have been still less willing to endure her seclusion. But though she did not know her own family history, the sad fact that had prompted her mother, while still a young woman, to bury herself and her child at Applehurst was well known to several people.

When that stern resolution had come to the new made widow, as she looked round on Kingsworth, and thought of the terrible doubt in which her husband's fate was involved, thought of the way in which the country round must regard her daughter's inheritance, a great horror of the place weighed on her. The Canon and Mr. Macclesfield, the family man of business, might manage the estate as they liked,—she would never live there, never go there, and Katharine should not grow up where every one looked askance at her.

It was a vehement, one-sided resolution, and Canon Kingsworth did not approve of it; but as, of course, Katharine's minority had never been contemplated, the will named no personal guardians for her, and he could not, if he would, have taken her from her mother's charge. Applehurst belonged to Mrs. Kingsworth herself, and thither she betook herself with her year-old baby, and there, with one short interval, she had remained ever since. Katharine was now a woman, and even her mother began to feel that something more was due to her.

Mrs. Kingsworth was a woman of very strong principles and perhaps not very tender feelings. She was clever, high-spirited, and very handsome, when as Mary Lacy she had married George Kingsworth, and had he

been worthy of her, might have softened into an excellent woman. But when she discovered his falsity, neither her love nor his terrible death threw any softening veil over her disappointment. She shuddered at her own disgrace yet more than at his, and every association connected with him was hateful to her. She was really perfectly unworldly, and she did not care at all for the wealth and position that had tempted him.

She took Katharine away, determined to rear her up in high, stern principles, and never to allow her to become accustomed to the life of an heiress. Let her be happy and know that she could be happy without Kingsworth, and on the day she was twenty-one let her give it back to her cousin Emberance.

This was the clue to Mrs. Kingsworth's conduct, this was the hope, nay, the resolve of her life, and therefore she brought up Katharine to be independent of luxuries and of society, therefore she secluded her from all intercourse with those of her own rank, fearing lest any marriage engagement might tie her hands, or any preference warp her judgment, before the day when she could legally free herself from the weight of her wealth.

Mrs. Kingsworth, like many another parent, did not calculate on the unknown factors in the problem,—the will and the character of her own child.

Katharine grew up a merry, healthy child, sufficiently intelligent, but without the love of books, which her mother had hoped to see, with all natural instincts strong in her, and with an ardent desire to have other little girls to play with.

"Mamma, tell me how you used to go and drink tea with your cousins,"—"Mamma, do ask a little girl to come and stay here,"—"Mamma, I should like to go to Mrs. Leicester's school," were among her earliest aspirations.

Her mother was clever and well-informed enough to educate her well, but solitary study was uninteresting to so sociable a being, and the girl was devoid of the day-dreaming faculty, which while it would have given form to her desires, might have whiled away many a dreary hour. As it was, the poor child jarred her mother with every taste and turn that she developed.

High-mindedness was to be cultivated by a careful and sparing selection of poetry and romance; but this provoking Katharine at twelve years old borrowed the kitchen-maid's Sunday-school prizes, and preferred them to the "Lady of the Lake."

She thought her mother's heroes tiresome, and with that curious instinctive resistance of strong-willed childhood to any set purpose of influence, could not be induced to care for the glorious tales of self-sacrifice and noble poverty which still made her mother's blood thrill and her eyes brighten.

She was very carefully instructed in religious matters, and duly every Sunday attended service at Applehurst, a tiny country church with a very old-fashioned childless vicar, and one very quiet Sunday service. When Katharine was sixteen, the one event of her life took place, and her mother took her for three days to Fanchester, the cathedral city, where Canon Kingsworth lived, to be confirmed.

The vicar had nominally prepared her, her mother had endeavoured earnestly to influence her. Surely the first sight of the glorious cathedral, the solemn service, would awaken in the girl that tone of mind in which she now seemed so deficient.

But to Katharine the railway journey, the town, the people were a dream, or rather, a reality of delight.

"We will take Katharine over the cathedral to-day, that it may not be quite strange to her to-morrow," said the Canon's wife on the first morning.

"Oh please—please—but I shall see that to-morrow. Oh, Aunt Kingsworth, let me go and buy something in a shop. Let me see the streets first!"

And though she was obedient and decorous, it was evident that she could not think or feel in such a world of enchanting novelty. She could only look and enjoy.

After the Confirmation was over, her uncle delayed a few minutes and presently came in, bringing with him across the narrow close one of the white-veiled girls, who had just been confirmed.

"Mary," he said briefly, "this is Emberance Kingsworth. Katharine, this is your cousin."

"Oh, have I got a cousin?" cried Katharine vehemently, as she rushed at Emberance and reached up to kiss her. For Emberance was a tall, slim creature, with large soft eyes and a blushing face.

She looked with a certain shrinking at the new relations, though she returned the kiss.

"Miss Kingsworth is pleased to find a new cousin," said a lady who was present.

"Miss *Katharine*," said her mother, turning round on the speaker, "my niece is Miss Kingsworth if you please."

The interview was not allowed to last long, and Emberance was sent back to join her schoolfellows, but Katharine never forgot it,—nor indeed her visit to Fanchester.

She knew what she wanted now, and chafed when she did not get it. And month by month and year by year she and her mother grew further apart, and only Katharine's childish, undeveloped nature kept her feelings within bounds.



CHAPTER V.

SPECULATIONS.

THAT hot autumn day was destined, little as she knew it, to be a crisis in Katharine Kingsworth's life. She was very far from expecting that anything should happen to her, as she sauntered along by the garden wall, eating her peaches, and wondering what to do when she had finished them. She was accustomed to have her time pretty well filled up with her studies; but the absence of object and of emulation had made these of late very wearisome to her, and her mother had half unconsciously relaxed the rein, having indeed nearly come to the end of her own powers. Carefully as she learned and taught, the want of contact with other minds deprived her own of its freshness. Katharine at nineteen was sick of reading history and doing sums, and of talking French one day and German the next. She did not like drawing, and her musical taste was of a commonplace kind, and could not flourish "itself its own delight."

She loved her mother; but she was afraid of her, and

conscious of failing to satisfy her, and the impatient desire of change hid from her all the pleasure of association and long habit.

"I wonder if mamma means this to go on for ever," she thought. "Am I to live here till I am as old as she is? Surely other girls have more variety. I don't know much about it—but I begin to think our lives are odd as well as disagreeable. Surely we *could* go again and see Uncle Kingsworth—or go and stay somewhere else? We *could*—why don't we? Are we rich, I wonder?"

The childishness of a mind which had never had anything to measure itself with, and the unvarying ascendancy of a most resolute will, had so acted that Katharine had never distinctly put these questions to herself before. Often as she had murmured, she had never resisted, nor realised the possibility of resistance. Often as she had declared that her life was hateful to her, she had no more expected that it would change than that the sun would come out because she complained when it was raining.

Katharine was impetuous; but if she had any of her mother's strength of purpose it was as yet undeveloped. Yet all sorts of impulses and desires were awakening within her, and gradually driving her to a settled purpose —namely, to question her mother as to her reasons for living at Applehurst, and her intentions for the future.

It would be difficult to realise how tremendous a step this seemed to Katharine. To have an opinion of her own and grumble about it, was one thing—to act upon it, quite another—still she got up from her knees by the lavender bush, which she had been cutting while

indulging in these meditations, and walked slowly into the house. Katharine never remembered coming into her mother's presence in her life without a certain sense of awe and of expectation of criticism, and now as she opened the drawing-room door, her heart beat fast, and her colour, always bright enough, burnt all over her forehead and neck.

It was a pretty pleasant drawing-room; with an unmistakable air of refinement and cultivation; plenty of books and tokens of occupation, while all the furniture was handsome and in good order.

Mrs. Kingsworth was sitting at a davenport, writing a letter. She was a tall woman, with a figure slender and *élancé* as that of a girl, delicate, regular features, and a small head adorned with an abundance of smooth, dark hair. Spite of her quiet black dress and cap, she had lost little of her youthfulness, and her eyes were bright, keen, and full of life. Otherwise it was a still set face, with little variety of expression, and spite of some likeness of form and colouring most unlike in character to the changing flushing countenance of the girl beside her.

"Isn't it time you found some occupation, Katharine?" she said.

There was no displeasure in her tone, but as Katharine stood silent, she said quietly, "Go and practise for an hour, I don't like to see you doing nothing."

"What *can* it matter what I do?" said Katharine impetuously, her quickly roused temper diverting her in a moment from her purpose.

"Only as rational occupation is rather a better thing than idleness," said Mrs. Kingsworth with a touch of satire in her voice.

"I mean —. Mamma, I want to know whether we are to live at Applehurst for ever and ever?" cried Katharine, suddenly and without any warning.

"What makes you ask me such a question?" said her mother quickly.

"Because I want an answer to it, mother! because I—I want to go away. I want to know why we never have any change. I should like to go to the sea-side—to have some friends. I hate Applehurst!"

Katharine was so frightened that there were tears in her voice as she spoke. She stood behind her mother's chair, and twitched her hands together nervously. Mrs. Kingsworth looked down at her letter.

"I thought, Katie," she said, "that I had taught you to look for better things than change and amusement. It would grieve me very much if you had a turn for constant excitement. That is a kind of character which I despise."

"I think it is very dull here," said Katharine; "I want to know people. I want to do something different."

She was fairly crying by this time, and after a minute's silence her mother went on speaking.

"Do you know, Katharine, what I consider to be more worth living for than anything else?"

"What?" said Katharine surprised.

"The opportunity of doing a noble action," said Mrs.

Kingsworth, in a low tone; "so to live and so to think and believe that if a great choice came to one, one would do the right thing, let the consequences be what they might."

She laid down her pen that her daughter might not see her hand tremble. It was quite as critical a moment to her as to Katharine.

"Yes, but I don't see what all that has to do with our being shut up in Applehurst!"

"Perhaps not—but you can recognise the principle that life has better aims than amusement. Believe me, no good is worth having which is bought at the expense of the slightest self-reproach."

"I don't mean to be cross, mamma," said Katharine, entirely mistaking her drift, "but if we could go away sometimes—you know I *am* grown up."

"Are you?" said Mrs. Kingsworth. "Sometimes you are so childish that I can hardly believe it. If I could see that you had more fixed principle, that you really cared for your duty, I might think it more possible to expose you to temptations of which you now know nothing."

"But, mamma, I don't want to do anything wrong."

"I think you do not see the beauty of caring for the highest right."

Katharine pouted. She was too well trained to be flippant; but her mother's tone irritated her; so that contrary to the principle in which she had been trained that nothing was ever gained by crying for it, she burst into tears. Mrs. Kingsworth looked round at her as

she stood sobbing in a vehement girlish fashion, and rubbing her eyes with her pocket-handkerchief.

"Well," she said, "you will have a little change. Uncle Kingsworth has written to propose a visit, and I am telling him that we shall expect him here on Monday. If you like," she added after a pause, "you can tell him your troubles."

"He might ask us to go again to stay with him," said Katharine, brightening up.

Her mother made no answer, and the girl slipped away into the garden and sat down on the grass. She felt ruffled and vexed, with an impression that her mother was very unsympathising, and that the sentiments which she had uttered were tiresome, matter-of-course truisms, not worth enforcing. But Uncle Kingsworth was coming, and that was something to look forward to. And before many minutes had passed Mrs. Kingsworth heard Katharine run up stairs, humming a tune.

She sat still herself, oppressed with a sense of failure. How could she ever rely on this impatient childish girl to carry out the act of restitution on which her heart was set?

"If she fails I should despise her!" said Mrs. Kingsworth to herself with slower tears than Katharine's rising in her eyes, "yet I suppose her wishes are natural."

She loved her daughter as much as ever daughter was loved; but she cared infinitely more that Katharine should be good than that she should be happy, and this principle carried out logically in small matters made her the very opposite of a spoiling mother.

Still she was enough disturbed by what had passed to resolve almost for the first time in her life on consulting Canon Kingsworth. Her clear high purpose had crystallised itself in her mind, and had been sufficient for itself—every other influence had been a disturbance from it.

Canon Kingsworth's rare visits were always a pleasant excitement at Applehurst. The later dinner, the different dress, the turning out of the spare bedroom gave an unwonted feeling of "company" in itself cheerful. Not that there was ever anything to complain of in the household; for though Mrs. Kingsworth was not a woman who found pleasure in domestic details, she was accustomed as a matter of course to have everything kept up to a certain mark of propriety and comfort.

But the sound of a man's voice in the house, the conversation on general topics, the bright sense of outside life was enchanting to Katharine. The Canon was a fine old gentleman—still in full vigour, with abundant white hair and eyes and features of a type which his great-niece inherited. He had a certain respect for her mother and great pity, though not much liking; while she, vigorous and independent as she was, could not help a certain leaning to the only person who still called her "Mary."

Conversation was general on the evening of the Canon's arrival, and he took much pains to cultivate Katharine and to draw her out. On former occasions she had been full of eager talk of her lessons or her pets, or of inquiries for things and people seen in her never-to-be-

forgotten visit to Fanchester; but to-day she was quiet and demure, so that the next morning after breakfast when she went to practise and Canon Kingsworth was left alone with her mother, he said,

"Katharine is a very pretty girl; but she wants manner."

"I am uneasy about Katharine. I do not know how to act for the best," said Mrs. Kingsworth abruptly.

"I suppose she begins to desire a little society," said the Canon.

"Yes, almost to demand it."

"Well, Mary, you know what I have always thought, that with the best intentions you did Katharine injustice in keeping her in ignorance of her true position."

"Her *true* position!" said Mrs. Kingsworth under her breath.

"Yes, however obtained, she is the owner of Kingsworth, and in two years' time her duty will be to do her best for the welfare of the place and the people."

"Do you not really know, Uncle Kingsworth, what my one aim has been in educating Katharine?" said Mrs. Kingsworth, looking up steadily at him.

"I have always supposed that you have educated her in the way which you conscientiously think the best; though as you know, I have not always agreed with your view."

"I shall tell you the whole truth," said Mrs. Kingsworth with sudden resolution. "I cannot conceive that any one can take another view of the matter. You know that I believe—that I am sure this property was ob-

tained by an act of the greatest possible injustice. An act of meanness! I am bound to say the truth, whoever was the actor."

"Indeed, Mary, I think those sad suspicions are far better laid to sleep," said the Canon gravely.

"I do not agree with you," said Mrs. Kingsworth. "The only reparation is to undo the wrong. Katharine and I cannot have masses said for my husband's soul; but we can refuse to profit by the sin that he committed. We need not share it. I wish Katharine on the day she comes of age to give up the estate to the rightful heiress, her cousin Emberance. I have tried to show her in all my training the beauty of self-sacrifice, to make the right thing so good in her eyes that she should be ready to prefer it to selfish pleasure. I never meet with a response! I cannot trust in her carrying out my purpose."

Mrs. Kingsworth's voice had faltered as she went on, and now broke down completely; while the eyes, which she had raised with a certain childlike directness, filled with tears.

Canon Kingsworth took two turns up and down the room before he answered her, and then said slowly and deliberately,

"I do not consider that Katharine is called upon to make such a renunciation."

"Not legally, I know," said Mrs. Kingsworth.

"Nor, I think, on any principle. Let us be plain with each other. You think that but for George's reticence the property would have gone to James. There is no

doubt that had my brother been aware that his sons would only leave a girl apiece, he would have left the bulk of it to Walter Kingsworth, his cousin. I think that had he known all the circumstances of James' marriage, he would not have wholly disinherited him; but I think that enough had passed to prevent him from making an eldest son of him. Indeed the place would have been ruined if he had. James deserved his punishment. Moreover, Mary, no living man will ever know what lies between their memories."

"James' deserts do not affect the question. Better give up all than retain part, even unfairly. My husband deceived his father, his daughter shall not enjoy the reward of that deception."

"But the scandal, the publicity—"

"I do not care for the scandal. The real shame lies in the fact, not in the knowledge of it. Let every one know the part my husband played; sin *must* bring shame. They will know too that his daughter has no part in the matter."

"And how could James' memory come out?"

"I do not care to clear James' memory, but my own hands and Katharine's. I do not care what becomes of Kingsworth. Let it go to ruin,—what is that to me?"

"It certainly ought to be something to Katharine,—a Kingsworth herself," said the Canon, somewhat affronted.

"So," pursued Mrs. Kingsworth, unheeding, "I thought she should have a ready-made life independent of Kingsworth, that her affections should not cling to it. When

her hands are free, *then* I should wish her to have the chance of marrying like other girls, though I hope she will remain single."

"You would be very much blamed, Mary, if you did not give the child an opportunity of judging for herself."

"Well,—possibly. You think I ought to take her to Kingsworth now?"

"Yes, and I entreat you to avoid influencing her decision."

"Well, I promise to leave her to work it out for herself."

"That is right, Mary. And at any rate show her something of the ordinary life and interests of young ladies. I allow that the circumstances are very unusual, and I think she does owe much consideration towards Emberance. Ask her to stay with you at Kingsworth, she is a charming girl."

"I have no wish to know anything of Emberance," said Mrs. Kingsworth, hastily, "it is not for her sake I act, but,—well, if you think it might incline Katharine to what I wish."

"I think the two cousins ought to know each other. Now the question is how far Kate should be told of past events. I should say as little as possible."

"I shall tell her one day; she is not fit to understand it now," said Mrs. Kingsworth.

"I should like to talk to her," said the Canon, and accordingly he sought Katharine in the little breakfast room. She was sitting on the music-stool, with one hand on the keys, but the notes were silent, till as she

heard footsteps, she started and struck a chord. Her uncle came and stood beside her.

"Katharine," he said, "I hear that you are tired of Applehurst. Do you know that you have another home?"

"Kingsworth? I know my father lived there. Oh, I should like to see it."

"Your grandfather left that property by will to you, and your mother now consents to take you there."

"Oh, uncle," cried Katharine, flying at him and throwing her arms round his neck, "to go away, to see a new place! Dear, dear uncle, thank you, thank you."

"Wait a bit, my child, it is not all sunshine. There are some very sad circumstances in our family history which make Kingsworth a mournful place to your mother and to me. Your inheritance is the result of events not only sorrowful but such as we cannot look back on without a feeling of shame. When you go there, there will be something for you to retrieve."

Katharine looked grave, but with the dutiful solemnity of a child, inwardly every pulse was dancing, and when her uncle left her she stood for a minute, then with a spring and a cry that she could hardly repress, went dancing down the garden-path, clapping her hands together. Canon Kingsworth thought that he could understand her mother's dissatisfaction.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OTHER PARTY.

AT the garden-gate of a pretty little house in one of the suburbs of Fanchester, on a sunny evening a few days after Canon Kingsworth's visit to Applehurst, stood the disinherited heiress, Emberance Kingsworth. Unlike Katharine, she was fully instructed in her rights and in her wrongs; so fully that they were an old story to her, and had lost much of their interest. For life was pleasant enough, pleasanter since her mother and aunts had left off school-keeping; for Emberance did not like teaching, and preferred the various interests of domestic life.

She was very pretty, tall and lithe, with fair fresh colouring, and abundant light-brown hair, well-opened eyes of deep grey, and a certain air of candour and simplicity, serene and single-hearted.

She stood looking down the long suburban road, with its edge of lime trees, its little villas with fanciful gates, breaking the shrubberies of mountain-ash and acacia, lilac and hawthorn, that fronted the road. She made a

pretty picture, with the flickering shadows of an acacia tree on her white dress and straw hat, and looked less like an injured heiress brooding over her wrongs, than a happy girl watching wistfully for a possible meeting.

Perhaps her uncle, the Canon, was not exactly the figure that she had expected to see, but as he came in sight down the road, she ran forward to meet him with ready affection.

"Well, my dear," he said as he kissed her, "I am glad to see you here, for I wanted to have a little chat with you."

"Did you, uncle?" said Emberance, blushing under her hat, and believing that she guessed the subject of his intended discourse.

"Yes, you are old enough, Emberance, and I hope sensible enough to have some power of judging of your own circumstances."

"Yes, uncle," said Emberance. "I think I ought to be allowed to judge a little for myself. Indeed, I could never wish for anything different under *any* circumstances, and I can't see *what* circumstances are likely to arise in my life that could alter matters for me."

"No," said the Canon. "I am glad you have not been taught to look far away."

"Mamma says that I ought to choose from a different circle, but I cannot now. And of course we know that we must wait," said the girl, timidly, but with firmness.

"Choose? *we?* wait? hullo!" said the Canon, "what does this mean I should like to know?"

"Oh, uncle," cried poor Emberance in dismay, "I thought you knew,—I thought you came about it! I thought he told you!"

"I came about something quite different. What is it, my dear? Or must I not pry into young ladies' secrets?"

Emberance was very fond of her uncle, and after she had recovered her breath and her courage, she began her little story with great straightforwardness.

"It is Malcolm Mackenzie, uncle, and he is going to New Zealand. He has some cousins there, who have a good deal of land. He has a little money, but they say he must come out first and look about him before investing it. He has no one belonging to him to keep him in England. It's not a bad prospect—for these days, uncle," said Emberance, with a sort of imploring simplicity, "and his family is just as good as mine. Mother says, however, that there is no knowing how things might change, and that I should never have cared for him if I had seen more people. But I should,—no one can know that but I. It only happened yesterday, uncle, and I told mamma last night. But she says she will not consent to acknowledge an engagement nor to any correspondence. I should be a great deal happier if she would."

"Well, Emberance, I will hear what your mother has to say about it. You will hardly have any attention to spare for the real object of my visit."

"Oh, yes, uncle, I shall," said Emberance, readily.

"*You*, I believe, have not been kept in ignorance of

the circumstances by which your father lost his inheritance?"

"I know that my uncle made my grandfather believe what was not true about him."

"So we have feared," said the Canon, "but, my dear, it is right that you should also know that there was very much that was quite true to cause your grandfather anger."

Emberance coloured as she said in a low voice,

"Yes, I thought so. But—but that which came after?"

"As to that," said her uncle solemnly, "there is only One Who knows the truth."

"Mother says she is sure that—that—he was *killed*," said Emberance, faintly.

"She cannot be sure. We know nothing, and have no right to a guess. But, Emberance, my dear, I have always felt that the two who were left orphans on that fatal night, have a special claim on me,—you and your cousin Kate."

"*I* do not think we ought to blame Katharine or her mother," said Emberance with emphasis.

"Her mother, no indeed. Katharine has never been told anything. Her mother has kept her away from Kingsworth, taking grudgingly the least advantage from her inheritance. But they must go there now, and they wish to take you with them. Kate is an odd girl and needs a young companion. Am I doing right in asking you to go for a month or two?"

"I will go," said Emberance, "if mother will let me. I think, uncle, that though all that dreadful past is a

very sad thing in our lives, it would be much better to make a fresh start and forget about it. After all, Kate and I are only girls, it does not matter *so much* which is the eldest."

This view, though coinciding with the Canon's own, surprised him a little as coming from Emberance's lips; and perhaps she perceived this, for she added a little pleadingly, "One's wrongs get so tiresome, uncle, and I am very happy as I am."

The Canon smiled, and left her in the garden as he went in to speak to her mother. Emberance sat down on a bench. Kingsworth and Katharine held but a secondary place in her thoughts just then, and were, as she had said, a very old story.

The old wrong, which had weighed ever since on the mind of the one widow, had been equally fresh in the memory of the other; but instead of a constant remorse, it had been a constant resentment, and in a more commonplace mind had become intensely personal.

Mrs. James Kingsworth was not a bad sort of woman; but her loyalty to her dead husband took the form of forgetting and ignoring all his failings, and of laying the utmost stress on all his grievances. Nothing would induce her to believe that Mrs. George Kingsworth had not been a party to the old concealment, and she entertained a personal dislike to the girl who stood in her daughter's place.

She had worked hard and done her best to bring up Emberance well, and as much as possible in accordance with her birth, discouraging the girl from helping

and working in the narrow household, sacrificing her own appearance to buy clothes for her, and doing her best to make her a helpless fine lady. But Emberance, like Katharine, was a failure from her mother's point of view. Her best point was a certain active kindliness, an inveterate sociability and readiness of intercourse and friendliness: which made dependence and exclusiveness utterly alien to her. Another less praiseworthy characteristic was an innate determination to "gang her ain gate." She liked, too, what was sunshiny and commonplace, and the tragic side of her history bored her. All straits of poverty had long since been over, through a legacy left to her mother and unmarried aunt, and Emberance had had a very prosperous girlhood.

Canon Kingsworth when he left Emberance crossed the little garden and entered by a French window into a pleasant little drawing-room, where sat Mrs. Kingsworth, and her sister Miss Bury.

The widow was a pretty woman, fair and fresh like her daughter, but with more regularity of feature; her voice and manner too were bright and pleasant. Miss Bury was a gentler, plainer person, and somewhat of an invalid; but she was the more cultivated person of the two, and had been the mainstay of the former school.

Both ladies rose with alacrity to receive the Canon, the best chair was put forward for him, a cup of tea was sent for, and everything done to honour his visit.

His suggestions were not quite so welcome, at least to Mrs. Kingsworth, and it needed all her respect for him to induce her to acquiesce in his proposal that Ember-

ance should visit "her father's house when in the possession of her enemies."

"My dear Ellen," said Miss Bury gently, "I think that is an unwise expression."

"It is one which is not to the point," said the Canon gravely.

"Well, uncle," said Mrs. Kingsworth, "I give in to your wish. I think you ought to be consulted about Emberance; but I *do* consider those who keep my child out of her birthright as her enemies. And *now* the evil of it is seen. I really think I must confide in you, Uncle Kingsworth."

"Emberance I believe has done so already. What are the objections to this young gentleman? His personal character?"

"Oh, no," said Miss Bury; "that is, I might say, irreproachable."

Mrs. Kingsworth admitted as much, and that even the prospect in New Zealand was fair, but after many words her objections resolved themselves into a determination not to allow Emberance to be bound at her age, "when no one knew what might happen." And to this she held firm, nor, truth to tell, did the Canon greatly care to shake her resolution.

Emberance meanwhile had met her lover in the garden as he came to learn the final decision. He was a tall grave young Scot, manly and decided-looking, and though he was but three years her elder, there was something of awe mingled in the affection with which Emberance looked up in his face and listened to his words.

He was not at all the sort of person that she had ever pictured to herself as a likely choice, for she had been brought up among commonplace influences, and her dreams of the future had been exceedingly commonplace too, and had turned on lovers in quite an ordinary manner. She liked attention, and, as a pretty half-grown girl, had met with a good deal; but she did not intend finally to yield except to an ideal youth, the colour of whose hair, and the expression of whose eyes had been accurately decided upon, while his admiration of herself was to be evident from their first meeting.

Malcolm Mackenzie was rather awkward, and very silent; and Emberance had no idea for a long time that he distinguished her in any way, except by arguing with her and making her feel her observations unaccountably foolish. Nor could he by any stretch of the imagination be called handsome.

Emberance did not know how much pains she took to avoid being considered foolish, till one day Mr. Mackenzie overtook her when she was out walking, and with the earnestness and sincerity of the declaration of his feelings which he made, drove the ideal hero for ever out of the remotest corners of Emberance's memory.

With quite a new humility she forgot all the claims of her pretty face and attractive ways, her little vanities lost their force as she murmured that she was afraid she was very silly, and not nearly good enough to be any one's choice, certainly not *his*,—she should be very disappointing to him.

Malcolm Mackenzie had replied that she herself could

never disappoint him. If she could only love him as he loved her, only make up her mind to waiting patiently, *only* be constant and true.

Only! Emberance gave her promise with a little gasp of awe, even when she hoped that a regular engagement might be permitted to guard her constancy, and save her from the temptations that might assail it. She did not hesitate, nor feel any doubt as to her own decision, even her tears at the thought of parting were checked in his presence.

"I shall not say that I have done wrong in telling you that I love you," he said, "because to know your feelings is such a joy to me that I cannot think it can be pain to you. *I* shall be happy even if I do not hear from you. I shall never doubt you, never fear that you could change. Nor need you."

"But—things may happen," murmured Emberance, hardly prepared to emulate this courage, and almost terrified at such entire trust, "and I shall so *want* to hear of you."

"Ah, yes," he said more softly, "letters would be very sweet; but still—we know we love each other, and that is so much to me, that nothing can ever put me out of heart."

Poor Emberance! she felt that this was stern teaching, —a promise, a letter, or a ring, some outward pledge, some little sweetness to soften the long parting would have made all the difference in her eyes. Did she love less, or did she know better than the lad whose utter trust in himself and in her, scorned outward ties and symbols?

Moreover, she had still the hope that her mother would yield, and permit the engagement; but Mrs. Kingsworth was firm, and without pledge or promise, beyond the confession of their mutual love, the pair were parted, never to hear from each other again till Emberance was twenty-one, or till Malcolm Mackenzie had a home to offer her. Nor was the affair to be mentioned to any one.

"Because you know, Emmy," said her mother, "you are not bound in any way."

Emberance said nothing, but she felt in her secret soul that all the worth of her future life depended on her making good her lover's trust. It was not bright and easy to have a lover so far out of reach; but even while her tears flowed she felt that Malcolm had left a little of his courage behind him. While he perhaps discovered that silence and separation were hard even to the most high-minded affection.

CHAPTER VII.

FRIENDSHIP.

"OH, Emberance! I am so glad to have a friend! I never have had any one to talk to, I have thought of you ever since the day I was confirmed. Oh, how I have wished that I could be confirmed every year!"

Katharine Kingsworth was standing in a little breakfast room in the Canon's house at Fanchester. The grey towers of the cathedral with a background of trees just touched with the vivid tints of autumn, were visible through the window; but Katharine heeded nothing but Emberance, almost devouring her with her round brown eyes, and standing before her at a little distance like a kitten ready to spring.

"It *is* very nice for cousins to be acquainted," said Emberance.

"Oh, yes! and I have always been shut up by myself. You'll teach me all that other girls do, and we *will* be friends."

And suddenly the kitten sprang, and throwing her arms round Emberance, hugged her, and kissed her with irresistible warmth.

All the kindliness of Emberance's nature awoke at the appeal, and all lurking sense of their relative positions yielded at the clasp of Katharine's hands, and then at the warm touch of her lips.

"I *will* love you, Katharine," she said, earnestly, "and friends we will be, I promise."

The words did not mean nearly so much after all, to Katharine who knew no reason to prevent their friendship, as to the speaker, but they were entirely satisfactory to her, and as she subsided on to the floor at Emberance's feet, she looked up at her and laughed joyfully.

She seemed so youthful a creature that Emberance felt as if she must go back to old methods of making acquaintance and begin, "How many lessons do you do?"—"Tell me something about yourself," she said, wishing to find out what Katharine knew of the family history.

"There's nothing to tell, I have lived all my life shut up at Applehurst. Uncle Kingsworth says mamma came away from Kingsworth because some very sad things happened there. I suppose it was my father dying so young, but that's a long while ago, and we can begin fresh."

"Katharine," interposed Emberance who had been watching the street from the window, "here is my mother, she is coming to call on yours, let us go into the drawing-room."

"Oh yes, I should like to see a morning call. No one ever called but the Rector and old Miss Evesham, and I want to see Aunt Ellen too."

Emberance followed her as she jumped up and ran

into the drawing-room, with considerably more anxiety as to the result of the interview, to which Mrs. James Kingsworth had worked herself up, with much doubt and disinclination.

There she stood in her best attire, greeting her sister-in-law with scrupulous politeness, while she was received with a careful courtesy that was anything but cordial.

In flew Katharine, her blooming face all smiles, right into her aunt's arms.

"How d'ye do, Aunt Ellen? I'm so glad to see you. I'm so glad to have an aunt. Oh, thank you for letting me have Emberance to stay!"

"I am sure, my dear, it will be a pleasure to Emberance," said the aunt, won over spite of herself and utterly taken by surprise, while the Canon's wife noted the contrast with the previous greeting of Emberance and Mrs. George Kingsworth, when the latter's scrupulous cordiality had had so evident a strain in it as to abash the girl altogether.

"We shall indeed feel bound to make your daughter's visit pleasant to her," she said. "I am yielding to Katharine's great wish in going to Kingsworth."

"Oh," said Katharine, "so long as we came away from Applehurst, I don't think I much mind where we go to. Anything for a change."

The remark was made too eagerly to sound exactly flippant; but Emberance did think it sounded odd; and wondered what she should find in this vehement little creature when the first effervescence had subsided. Katharine's chatter carried off the difficulties of the visit how-

ever, and Mrs. James Kingsworth returned home with her distinct feelings of resentment somewhat confused.

A few days were passed at Fanchester, during which Katharine enjoyed the delights of buying herself some new clothes, and as she expressed it, "saw a party," as the Canon thought it well to give one and show the world his various relations sitting at the same dinner table.

He was a good deal perplexed by Katharine. Her unrestrained eagerness, and her self-absorption somewhat repelled him; while her affectionateness and merriment were pleasant. Everything seemed equally enchanting to her, and he suspected her of want of sense and discrimination, while her mother watched her with painful earnestness. Could self-sacrifice or high principle be expected from a girl who derived actual delight from finding herself with a pair of white kid gloves?

Emberance was a little overpowered by her, but she liked her, and better still, oddly enough, she liked the grave clear-eyed Aunt Mary, who looked so unjoyful, and behaved with such odd, cold graciousness towards herself. On the whole Katharine was sorry when the day came for their journey to Kingsworth, though the travelling charmed her. The Canon and his wife accompanied them, anxious to make the return as little painful as possible for Mrs. Kingsworth.

It was a wild wet evening, and as they drove from the station, the roaring of the sea grew louder and louder in their ears; Emberance caught glimpses of it covered with foam at intervals as the second carriage, in which the two

girls were, wound up a steep road towards the house through the dusk of the evening.

Katharine peeped and exclaimed at each dim object that they passed, but even she fell silent, and Emberance felt an increasing excitement, as they drove up to the door of a substantial square-built house. In the open doorway stood Mrs. George Kingsworth, her black figure defined by the lights behind her. She put aside Katharine as the two girls ran up the steps, and taking Emberance by both hands gave her a sudden silent kiss, then drew back and let them pass in together.

"Is this Kingsworth?" cried the outspoken Kate. "Dear me, it isn't as pretty as Applehurst."

Indeed, Kingsworth had few attractions beyond the wide sea view from its windows. It was perched upon the top of the cliffs, and what was called the park was really only a bit of enclosed down with a few stunted trees in it. The house had not been built by the Kingsworths and was hardly important enough to rank as a "country place;" while the rooms were small, low, and old-fashioned. The buying of it back had been a piece of sentiment; which its intrinsic advantages hardly warranted. There was, however, part of a ruined tower on the edge of the cliff, called Kingsworth Castle, and to the old Canon the wild sweep of the wind, the dash of the waves on the rocks, and the cry of the sea birds had a charm which all the quiet of his Cathedral Close could not rival. To him, Kingsworth was home, and now in old age his associations passed over the terrible tragedy that had broken that home to pieces, and went back to happy

boyish days, when he had little thought to see his father's proudly regained possession, the property of a thoughtless girl.

To Mrs. Kingsworth the place had never been pleasant. All the unhappy doubts and disappointments of her married life and their terrible culmination, seemed borne back to her with every familiar sound and sight, till she wondered how she should ever bear her stay. The next morning rose bright and sunny after the rain, and the Canon asked the two girls if they would like to walk to the shore with him. Both agreed readily, Emberance with a certain trepidation, since she knew that somewhere among those wild rocks had occurred the mysterious tragedy which had left herself and Katharine fatherless. She had never realised the old story among her busy surroundings; but it came back upon her now with a strange vague sense of horror.

Katharine meanwhile tripped along the narrow path before them, sparkling with eagerness and chattering over every conceivable subject.

She was a pretty creature in her bloom and brightness, and to those better informed there was something pathetic in her unconsciousness.

Canon Kingsworth led them down to the shore, which, save for the promontory where Kingsworth stood, was bleak and uninteresting, stretching away in low chalky cliffs.

The "rocks" were of limestone, and insignificant in size and shape; but below them was a wide expanse of sand. The place had none of the grandeur often seen on the

coast, and was impressive only from a certain wild dreariness, unfelt in the sparkling sunshine of the September morning. To Katharine it had all the charm of her first sea view, and she ran about picking up shells and seaweed, and demanding information on them with equal ignorance and eagerness.

The tide being low, they walked round by the sands to Kingsworth village, which was untidy, picturesque, and slatternly. There was a pretty Church, long and low, with a square weatherstained tower: and the Vicarage, which had hitherto been in possession of an old Vicar, who remembered the Canon's boyhood, had now fallen into other hands, and was filled with a large lively young family named Clare.

Mr. Clare met them as they came up the little irregular street, and the Canon introduced himself and his nieces, on which followed an inspection of the Church; the Vicar was perplexed at finding so little to indicate which young lady was his future Lady of the Manor, till he remarked that Mrs. Clare and his daughters were intending to call, when Katharine sparkled up and said eagerly, "Oh, yes, please; I hope they will. When will they come?"

"This niece," said Canon Kingsworth, "has led so solitary a life that companions are a new pleasure to her; but we think it right that she should make acquaintance with her future home."

Katharine was intensely eager about this promised visit, which seemed to her like the beginning of her new life, and her sudden springs to the window whenever she

fancied that she heard the front door bell, and her constant references to the subject annoyed her mother inexpressibly.

Kate had not long to wait; for the next day brought Mrs. Clare and her daughters, pleasant lively people, the two girls quite as desirous of the acquaintance as Miss Kingsworth herself could be, though they expressed it with somewhat more reserve. This rosy-cheeked girl rushing into friendship as if she had been fourteen instead of nineteen was not at all the heiress that they had expected.

Emberance was a very great assistance in all the difficulties of the new life. She made herself agreeable to the various families who came to call, and she kept Kate in order, and instructed her in various small pieces of social etiquette, taught her how to arrange her hair and when it was correct to wear gloves, and tried to induce her to regard the dinner parties to which they were duly invited with something like composure.

The Clares were their only near neighbours, and the only people with whom during the next few weeks the girls became in any degree really intimate, and with whom Kate learnt the joys of girlish companionship. And she did enjoy it with an intensity of delight, a want of proportion in her pleasure that sorely perplexed Mrs. Kingsworth, who, on her part, deprived her of what might have been a counterbalancing and sobering influence, in forbidding her to visit among the cottages or to take up any of the parish work to which the Clares might have introduced her, and which she would have

taken up quite as eagerly as anything else under their auspices. She flew into the drawing-room one day on her return from a visit to the Vicarage, exclaiming,

"Mamma! there are two of the dearest old women, a red cloak one of them has, and Mrs. Clare has asked me to go and read to them, and she says I may take them tea and sugar. She told me to ask you, but of course you will like me to do this, because no one can say it is not useful and sensible."

Mrs. Kingsworth's face assumed the intensely grave expression, which it wore when she felt that a hard task was laid upon her. She feared that awkward revelations might be made to Katharine in the course of such visits, and not being able to give her this chief reason for a refusal, she fell back on secondary ones.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Katie, but I don't think you have the necessary experience, and you do not know how much self-denial it costs to be regular in such a duty."

"But I can't have experience unless I begin. Mrs. Clare says they like something young and cheerful."

"I am sorry, Kate, but it cannot be. I will explain to Mrs. Clare."

Kate looked vexed for a moment, but she did not dream of resisting, and soon, too soon, as thought her mother, her wayward fancy turned to some fresh object of interest.

So "Kitty," as her new friends called her, was thus deprived of an important means of forming her character for herself, and also of taking kindly to the increase of

Church privileges offered by Mr. Clare to his parishioners, and which her mother felt to be a refreshment come back to her from the days of her youth. Kate indeed had no objection to frequent services, as they afforded opportunities of meeting her friends, the one object on which at present her heart was set. She took to them as part of the new and delightful life in which she met with new pleasures. She learned to play lawn-tennis and croquet, went out blackberrying, and boating, and enjoyed herself so intensely in the new young companionship, that she never speculated on past or future.

Emberance found things pleasant enough, but she felt as if there were years of life between herself and her cousin, as she thought of Malcolm Mackenzie's ship tossing on the waves which never rose without costing her an unreasonable sense of apprehension. She was also much more considerate of Mrs. Kingsworth than was Katharine; who never heeded her coldness or her silence, or the slight sarcasms bestowed on her vehement delights, setting it all down as "mamma's way."

CHAPTER VIII.

SOCIETY.

IT was a still evening late in October. The level rays of the setting sun struck on the Kingsworth rocks till the little cove had almost the warmth of summer. Soft rosy clouds floated over the blue vault and reflected their colour on the rippling water, and on the white wings of the sea-birds which hovered between sea and sky.

Katharine Kingsworth was sitting on a smooth dry stone with her feet on the warm sand, the red light brightening her face and hair, and making her little figure in its warm dark dress a picturesque object in the scene.

Katharine was alone and a little thoughtful, though her thoughts were pleasant ones, as she compared her present life with the dulness of Applehurst.

"Kitty is as fresh as if she had spent all her life on a desert island," one of the Clares had said of her, that morning.

"Well, Applehurst was a desert house if not a desert

island," Kate had replied. "*You* were all brought up differently. I wonder why—"

Some instinct checked the expression of her wonder on the girl's lips; but for the first time she realized *how* unlike her life was to that of other girls, and to feel that the circumstances of it were peculiar.

"Emberance's father and mine were drowned," she thought, "so mamma disliked the place for ever afterwards. That might be; but why should she shut me up at Applehurst, and make me so different to other girls? Why does she seem to dislike all my pleasure and to hint that it won't last. I don't think she is as kind to me as Mrs. Clare is to her daughters; how pleased she was for them to go to the pic-nic."

A certain hurt look came across Kate's bright face as these thoughts passed through her mind.

"When I am twenty-one I shall be able to do as I like," she thought. "I know that, because Minnie Clare let out that their father said they must not ask me now to give any money to do up the church, as I could not promise it rightly; but I think I shall ask mamma if I may not give them some now."

A pause in Katharine's reflections as she watched the gulls dipping into the water and floating upwards again towards the clouds, then—

"I suppose girls who have been all brought up together are much more amusing and know much better what to say than I do. I wonder—I wonder—if Major Clare observed any difference when he walked home with us yesterday from the Vicarage—"

"Why, Kate, are you actually here by yourself?" said Emberance, descending on her from the park above. "That is something unusual."

"It is rather nice to sit and think a little sometimes," said Kate.

"Well, *I* think so; but you never seem to have much to think about," said Emberance sitting down by her side.

"Why shouldn't I have as much to think about as you?"

Emberance laughed, a little conscious laugh, and a pretty blush came over her face.

"I don't think you have, Kitty."

"I *do* think," said Kate, "only there is so much to do. I think what it will be like when I can spend my money as I please. I suppose when I am twenty-one mamma will not be able to prevent me."

"I suppose not," said Emberance a little drily.

"But, Emmy, don't you think it would be just as proper for me to wear a jacket trimmed with fur, as for Miss Deane at Mayford?" said Katharine with great emphasis.

"Of course, why not? Why don't you get one? That black cloth is rather shabby. I would have a fur jacket if I could afford it directly."

Katharine looked at her and the colour rose a little in her face.

"Mamma looked at me," she said, "when I asked her about it, and said in her slow way, 'It would cost a great deal. Your cousin has not one.' And then, Emmy, I

said, I supposed that I—that mamma had more money than Aunt Ellen—and so—"

"So you might get one. Of course, Kitty, don't blush about it," said Emberance kindly. "I shan't be jealous."

"But," said Katharine, "mamma looked at me and the tears came into her eyes, and she said, as if she hated me, 'So you can enjoy pleasures your cousin does not share,' and went away."

"That was very hard on you, Kate," said Emberance warmly. "Aunt Mary should not have said so. Never mind, let us go in presently and talk about jackets, and I'll tell her I have some seal-skin trimming at home quite good. I don't want a new jacket."

Katharine threw her arms round her cousin and kissed her with an odd sense of gratitude.

"Dear, *dear* Emmy, I *should* like you to have one too," she said. "When I *am* twenty-one I'll give you one."

"Do," said Emberance laughing, "and trim it with grey fur. What a funny little child you are, Kitty!"

"Emberance," said Kate suddenly, "I never thought about it before. We are cousins. Why am I rich instead of you?"

"Because grandpapa left Kingsworth to your father and not to mine," said Emberance turning her head away with a sudden stiffness.

"Why?" said Kate.

"I don't quite know."

"Was he the eldest?"

"No," said Emberance reluctantly.

"Then, mamma thinks it wasn't fair," cried Kate with sudden quickness of apprehension.

"Nonsense, Kitty, it is all over and done with now, and can't be altered. It is no concern of ours, and I am sure I am very happy; let us talk of something else. What did you think of Major Clare?"

"Oh, he was very entertaining, he told me a long story about a tiger, and he is going to give Minnie a necklace made of its teeth. It seems odd that Mr. Clare's brother should be so young. And I like Mr. Alfred Deane, too. Do you think they'll dance with us if we go to the ball?"

"Very likely."

"Do you like dancing?"

"Oh very much indeed, I hope we shall go," said Emberance with involuntary heartiness, and then the thought crossed her, that an engaged girl, with a lover at the Antipodes, ought not to be elated at the thought of going to a ball.

But Emberance was very simple and natural, and though the ball would have been finer if her Robin had been there (by the way Malcolm Mackenzie hated dancing,) she could not regard it wholly with indifference.

It had been much under discussion, Mrs. Kingsworth having wished to refuse Mrs. Deane's invitation, and Kate naturally being equally in favour of accepting it, and indeed vehemently angry at being deprived of the pleasure. Every day seemed to Mrs. Kingsworth to make it plainer that her view of Kate's selfishness and frivolity was right. Every day the girl seemed to her a

less likely person to sacrifice pleasure and self-importance to the highest sense of right; every day she felt that she could not tell her her wishes without the chance of bitter mortification. And so she was cold to Kate, and the girl who was inconsiderate and selfish from want of knowledge of other people's views, opposed her more and more.

Emberance did not of course know that her aunt meditated a great act of restitution, but she perceived that she regarded her as an injured person, and having always heard her mother call her Aunt Mary a usurper, it came with a great surprise to her to find Aunt Mary of the same opinion. She perceived, too, how Katharine always appeared in a less amiable light to her mother than to any one else, how the frank caresses and innocent gaiety that made her a favourite among her friends, were chilled and repressed by the dread of criticism.

On this occasion as the two girls came back to the house together, Emberance said,

"You should not be so vehement about gaieties in talking to Aunt Mary, Kitty; she thinks you care for nothing else."

"But how can I help being vehement when I feel so?" said Katharine, opening her round eyes; "and I do care immensely about the ball."

"So do I; but still one ought not to be frivolous, and you might show a little more interest in other things."

"But Emmy," said Kate, "I don't think I have found out yet what sort of things I do like."

Emberance laughed and desisted, a little ashamed of

having suggested a prudential motive, when she saw how entirely it failed of being understood.

"I suppose," she said, "that seeing all the neighbours here, reminds Aunt Mary of old times, and makes her sad. We ought to remember that."

Kate looked a little impatient.

"That was so *very* long ago," she said, as she ran into the house, and opened the drawing-room door.

Mrs. Kingsworth was writing a note. "Katharine, I have accepted Mrs. Deane's invitation," she said.

"Have you? Oh, mamma, that's *lovely* of you!" cried Kate. "I never, never could have borne to stay at home."

"Thank you, Aunt Mary, we did wish very much to go," said Emberance.

"I suppose you did," said Mrs. Kingsworth. "Your uncle thought that I ought to take you, and he wishes to give you your dresses for the occasion."

"Oh, how very kind!" cried Emberance, with an immediate sense of delightful provision for many a Fanchester gaiety, beyond the special occasion, while Kate danced about the room, without a care for the future.

The white dresses, with white heather and fern leaves, promised to be equally becoming to Kate's vivid roses and chestnut locks, and to her cousin's blush-rose fairness and slender grace; and though Emberance was far the handsomer girl of the two, Katharine's chances were doubtless balanced by her heirship.

"I do hope I shall get some partners," she said energetically, one day, when the two girls had gone to play

lawn-tennis at the Vicarage. "I hope I shall dance every dance."

"Will you dance with me, Miss Kingsworth?" said Fred Clare, a youth of eighteen, at home, in an interval between school and college.

"Oh, yes," said Kate, heartily. "I should like to dance the first dance with you, because I can dance easily with you; and perhaps I shall not be able to manage it with strange partners."

"Fred, Fred, this is too bad," said his uncle. "You take an unfair advantage of your opportunities. Miss Kingsworth, is Fred to be the only one to obtain a promise beforehand?"

Major Clare was a handsome man of thirty, tall, dark-haired, and sunburnt, fulfilling very fairly a girl's ideal of an Indian officer. He had a pleasant laugh in his eyes, and a touch of satire not quite so pleasant in his voice; and his elder brother the Vicar, and still more the Vicar's wife, found him rather an incongruous element in the clerical household. Not that he was otherwise than perfectly decorous and well-conducted, or in the eyes of his relations other than a proper suitor for the heiress of Kingsworth, supposing his inclinations turned that way; but somehow under his influence, lawn-tennis, boating, and other amusements usurped a good deal more than their usual share of the family life. Fred, Minnie, and the younger ones were only too ready to follow his lead, and Rose, the eldest daughter, who was more soberly inclined, was cross because studies and parish work were neglected, and if she maintained some order, diminished

the harmony of the family circle. But the Major had no other home, and did not seem at present inclined to dispose of himself elsewhere.

Katharine blushed at his remark, and said with a little restraint,

"Oh, no, I should be very glad to dance with any one."

"For how many balls will you retain so much humility?" said Major Clare, laughing. "Let me take advantage of it while it lasts, and ask for two dances."

Kate assented, but she looked a little uncomfortable, and as a general move towards the lawn-tennis ground enabled her to speak to him apart, she said,

"Major Clare, I did not mean to *ask* you to ask me to dance just now."

Major Clare looked at her with a slight air of amusement.

"What has made you think of that?" he said.

"Well, I think Emberance looked at me," said the candid Kate.

"I should not have thought your cousin's eyes so formidable."

Something was added about the charm of simplicity, which Katharine was not quite sure whether she liked or not; but, enough consciousness was awakened to add a touch of excitement to her preparations for her first ball.



CHAPTER IX.

THE BALL.

"YES, Miss Deane, I have always had a great curiosity to see, what to speak romantically I may call the home of my ancestors; but I did not know that I should meet any connections here."

"But that is too delightful. A disinherited prince in real life!"

"No, no, Miss Deane, I am afraid 'disinheritance' is not quite to the point."

The speaker was a tall young man of four or five and twenty, whose roundish dark eyes and hooked nose were sufficiently of the Kingsworth type to satisfy any one on the look-out for a family likeness, while his good looks and pleasant open expression were enough to account for the interest which Miss Deane was expressing in his presence at the ball; the large rooms at Mayford were all gay with lights and flowers, as the company began to assemble from all the country round, for the Deanes were popular people, and the ball a large one.

"Not disinherited? Then who are you, Mr. Kings-

worth? And how does this little cousin come into possession?"

"Kingsworth belonged to our family, and the entail was cut off and the place sold some time in the last century by the owner who had ruined himself on the turf. He, however, left two sons, who set to work in various ways to earn their own living, and from the elder of these I am descended. We have been solicitors ever since my grandfather's time, and that Kingsworth ever belonged to us is a mere tradition. The younger son's family went into trade and made, I suppose, a large fortune, for you know they bought Kingsworth back. Perhaps there was some old quarrel, we have never had any intercourse with them; but you see, I can't exactly call myself disinherited."

"Well, no; but still you come of course with indescribable feelings to see the birthplace of your race?"

Mr. Kingsworth shrugged his shoulders and laughed.

"When your cousin kindly gave me Mrs. Deane's invitation, he offered Kingsworth as an inducement, and I liked the idea of seeing it. I once called on the old Canon when I went to Fanchester, and he told me that the other branch was represented by a young lady. Is she here now?"

"She is just coming in. That is Mrs. George Kingsworth, her mother, that is her cousin Emberance, and the little one is Katharine."

"One of *my* sisters is called Emberance," said Mr. Kingsworth in a tone of surprise.

"Ah, you see the links are not quite broken. Come, and I will introduce you to your cousins."

Neither Katharine nor her mother had ever realised the existence of these north country Kingsworths; but Emberance, far better informed in all the family traditions, knew who he was at once, and expressed a proper amount of pleasure at meeting him.

Mrs. Kingsworth, when the circumstances had been explained to her, felt a curious sense of perplexity at the discovery of an elder heir. She was obliged to repeat the story over again mentally to divest herself of the feeling that his appearance had in some way rendered the contention futile between the rights of Emberance and Katharine. She recollected a saying of the Canon's which at the time had given her great umbrage.

"After all, Mary, one girl is much the same as another, it is not as if there were a boy in the case."

"Right is right for girl or boy," she had answered truly enough.

She looked round at the gay scene almost as unfamiliar to her as to her child, for her girlhood had been short and quietly spent, and she felt that it was all distasteful and out of tune. Her stately beauty in her black velvet dress and white cap was more unusual and met with more comment than the charms of the two pretty girls who accompanied her, but she was ill at ease and shy after her long seclusion, unready with smiles and small talk, hardly knowing how to receive graciously the praises of Kate, or congratulations on her return, and noticing keenly every trifling indication which showed the heiress

to be superior in importance to her cousin. These perplexities spoiled all a mother's natural pleasures in her child's enjoyment and success, she forgot to count Kate's partners, and never thought to observe which were her favourite ones. Indeed so preoccupied was she that it never occurred to her to put herself in Katharine's place or to realise the possibilities of a young girl's entrance into society.

Kate meanwhile enjoyed herself without a misgiving, and did not suffer from any lack of partners. She was dimly aware that she liked dancing with Major Clare better than with any one else, and was pleased to think that he liked dancing with her. His sentiments were more defined. He wished to marry, and thought that Miss Kingsworth of Kingsworth was a very suitable choice, and he liked Kate herself and admired her appearance; but her *brusquerie* and self-absorption had hitherto deprived her simplicity of the softness which might have given it the charm it lacked. She was not in the least fascinating. Emberance could "play up to him" far better in any little passage of arms or exchange of jokes, and instinctively he knew that quiet and well behaved as she was, she cared far more both to please and to give pleasure.

But the little consciousness towards himself that was coming upon Katharine gave her more attraction; and the ball helped matters some way forward.

Walter Kingsworth meanwhile thought that he had met two very pleasant cousins, a few degrees of distance more or less did not make much difference when once

the title was acceded, and he was not ill pleased to be told by Mrs. Deane that both he and Katharine were like the Canon.

"Uncle Kingsworth says," said Kate, "that he is an owl, and I am an owlet."

"Ah," said the new cousin, "my brothers and school-fellows used to be in the habit of hooting at me, which I thought an insult; but now I shall plume myself on the resemblance."

"Shall you?" said Kate. "I don't know that it is so very comfortable to be a Kingsworth. But it is nice to have relations. I have enjoyed myself much more since I knew Emberance. Are you going to stay at Mayford?"

"For a few days, for some pheasant-shooting. May I come and see Kingsworth?"

"Oh, yes! But it isn't pretty. It is not as nice as many other houses. I think even Applehurst was nicer in itself. But then, there was no one to speak to, and as to going to a ball, I never *dreamed* of such a thing. I am very glad we came to Kingsworth."

"I shall like to see it, pretty or ugly," said her cousin as the music struck up again and Kate's partner came to claim her.

"And why do you like Kingsworth better than Applehurst?" said Major Clare, as they came—rather quickly—to a pause in the waltz. Kate's waltzing was not first-rate.

"Oh—because of friends," said Kate. "I was always by myself at Applehurst. Now I have Emberance, and even when she goes home, I shall have Rose and

Minnie. And I don't like seclusion; society is much pleasanter."

"Are Rose and Minnie the only new friends who make Kingsworth pleasant to you?" said the Major, in rather a sentimental tone and with some curiosity to see how she would avail herself of this opening. She said "No," quite simply and plainly, but her eyes drooped and she blushed vividly.

"I am glad of that," said Major Clare. "I want to be among the new friends that make Kingsworth pleasant to you. Because, you see, having friends at the great house has made my stay here quite a different thing for me. I used to think Kingsworth such a dull place, but now I have our walks, and games, and expeditions, they don't fail in interest. Do you remember that day, &c., &c.," till all sorts of new feelings, new ideas, and new possibilities were throbbing in Katharine's heart, and changing the child into a woman.

Emberance meanwhile had had a very successful evening and had thoroughly enjoyed both the dancing and the success. For Emberance knew what a girl's laurels are, and when they fell to her own share, she liked to crown her brows with them, even while she honestly called Malcolm Mackenzie to mind and hoped to herself that he was happy too.

But she was not nearly so much excited or so full of the ball afterwards as Kate, having indeed seen a few others, and Mrs. Kingsworth sighed to think that her girl should be so much more frivolous than was common.

A little more tact and observation would have shown

her that something which was not frivolous was beginning to mingle in the pleasant trifling intercourse of daily life. She had not herself seen very much of Major Clare, and hearing him spoken of as the Vicar's brother, had never realised how completely he was the companion of his nieces and their friends. She had lived so secluded a life and was of so unpractical a nature herself, that while she anxiously speculated whether Kate was not too fond of dancing and of dress, she never guessed that the dress was beginning to be worn and the dance to be valued for something more than itself.

No one could accuse Kate of contempt for simple pleasures, and she was quite as eager about an expedition for gathering blackberries, a day or two afterwards, as she had been about going to the ball itself.

"If you will only let us come and help you to *make* the jam, Minnie," she said, "I think that would be the greatest fun of all."

"I am afraid we are not domestic enough to make it ourselves," said Minnie.

"Don't you? Emmy does. She makes jam every summer."

Emberance would not have herself made this announcement; but she had the tact to answer readily.

"Yes, and very hot work you would find it, Kitty, if you really had it to do. Picking the blackberries is much pleasanter."

"Everything in its turn," said Kate, as she walked along the lane in the bright autumn sunlight, swinging her basket on her arm.

They had turned away from the sea, and the view offered nothing but commonplace fields and hedgerows, bounded by low chalky downs, but with the blue sky over head, and the rich autumn tinting of the hedges, the blackberry lane afforded a pretty setting for the group of young people, as they walked along laughing and chattering, Kate running ahead, and playing with the dogs, while Emberance followed more soberly in the rear, with the handsome picturesque Major by her side.

"Such fresh enjoyment is rare," he said, rather sentimentally. "How long can it last?"

"Katharine has never had any troubles, and she is naturally lively," returned Emberance.

"It is pretty to look at—but doesn't it place a creature rather out of one's sympathy, like a bird or a fairy? It is so very long since any outward circumstances could afford that sort of rapture."

"Yes!" returned Emberance, with a sigh for New Zealand, and then her conscience smote her, for, after all, was she not enjoying herself very much?

She blushed and then continued laughing:

"But you know, Major Clare, we are simple-minded country girls, and we do enjoy picking blackberries. Of course, it can't be expected that *you* should feel excitement at anything short of a tiger hunt."

"You don't know how much better I like the blackberrying."

"Have you actually exhausted tiger hunts? Do see if pricking your fingers in that very thorny bramble will afford you a fresh sensation."

Emberance could talk, and she was very pretty, much prettier, the Major thought, than her heiress cousin, and her honest desire to behave as a young lady with a secret engagement should, combining with her natural taste for little attentions, gave her a kind of consciousness that was pleasing to him. But it was but a faint and languid satisfaction, and he presently turned away in search of Kate in the hope that her naïveté might afford him a more lively one.

She was picking—and eating—blackberries with all her might, comparing her basket with her companions', scratching her fingers, and tearing her gown with the most entire enjoyment.

Major Clare was a very lazy picker, but he strolled up to her side, and contributed a few blackberries to her basket, asking her if she found the amusement begin to pall upon her.

"Oh, no!" said Kate. "Besides Mrs. Clare wants at least fourteen pounds of jam, she has only got six now, so there are a great many more to gather."

"Oh, I perceive you look on it from a business point of view."

"Why! we shouldn't come to gather blackberries if they were of no use! Of course it's *great* fun into the bargain."

"I am afraid I don't appreciate the blackberry jam after it is made."

"Oh no," returned Kate, seriously. "I don't suppose you do. Because of course you are accustomed to all sorts of wonderful fruits in India. And in the same way

after hunting elephants, and tigers, and having picnics in jungles, I dare say it seems very dull to gather blackberries. That's quite natural."

"But suppose," said Major Clare, repeating his remark to Emberance, but somehow moved to do so in a more serious manner, by the entire good faith of Kate's excuse for him—"suppose one had outlived the tiger hunts, &c., and that they too had ceased to have any power to charm? Could you understand a sort of general indifference, not to say disgust?"

Kate looked full at him for a moment, with her round brown eyes quite blank. Then they deepened and softened.

"But then you would be unhappy," she said.

"Well?"

"I mean, something must have happened to make you unhappy."

She turned her eyes away and blushed. The idea pained her, she hardly knew why.

"You evidently don't take in the meaning of being *blasé*."

"Oh yes," said Kate, "it is when people are wicked and have worn out simple pleasures."

Major Clare laughed.

"Miss Kingsworth," he said, "I am talking a great deal of nonsense to you. I do like picking blackberries —sometimes even now."

"Of course," said Kate, "my mother does not enjoy things as I do. But then she is unhappy because my father was drowned."

"I hope with all my heart," said the Major, "that you will never have cause to be unhappy. And I hardly think experience will show you the way to be always bored."

"Why no," said Kate, "because I think if people can't take an interest in something they must be very stupid themselves."

"And if they affect not to take an interest?—"

"Well, I don't see why any one should do that!"

"No? Is your basket full? Are you going to have another blackberrying to-morrow?"

They had another blackberrying in a few days' time, but the weather had changed, the frost had touched the fruit, and the downs looked cold and grey. But Kate was slow in forgetting that last gathering, for Major Clare told her a long story of a great fern-hunting in the days of his youth, before he had grown tired of picnics; and of certain early hopes which had been cruelly blighted.

He had never expected to enjoy those English country pleasures again.

Did Katharine think there could be a second spring of youth and enjoyment?

Poor Katharine!



CHAPTER X.

UNDER THE ROCKS.

WALTER Kingsworth was speedily enlightened by his hosts as to the present state of affairs in the reigning branch of the Kingsworth family, how the wrong young lady was the heiress, how the change of succession had been made, with a hint of the scandal that had accompanied it, and of the tragedy that had followed it.

The whole history interested Walter extremely. He belonged to a prosperous and prosaic family, and had led a very prosperous and prosaic existence, with no doubts as to his future, and no particular discontents as to his present. His father was very well off, and held a very good position in the north country town, round which his business was situated, but beyond being perfectly well aware of the fact, that his family was as good as that of any of his clients, he had not troubled himself much about his far-away kinsfolk in the south. Walter, however, was not insensible to the charms of a connection with an old tower and a family seat, and although he had ridiculed the "disinherited" view of his position, it was not quite with a stranger's feeling that he set forth soon

after the ball, to see the neighbourhood, and call at Kingsworth.

He had three or four miles to walk, through russet hedges, thick with hips and haws, and then over bleak and open downs till he came to the little fishing village running back into the shore in its green cove. It had a poverty-stricken look, and he was just reflecting that the Church and the little old school-house stood much in need of modern improvements, when he was joined by the Vicar, who was glad to tell a few of his grievances, and to express his hope that the young heiress might grow up to take an interest in the people who were all her tenants, and for whose welfare she was more or less responsible. He took Walter into the Church and showed him the monument of one of the last common ancestors of himself and Katharine,—a worthy in a full-bottomed wig, leaning on a funeral urn. After which there was a gap in the Kingsworth memorials, till they came to a tablet recording the death of Walter Kingsworth, and then one on which was written, "Found drowned, James and George Kingsworth. Aged 28 and 26 years. Nov. 15th, 18—."

"Ah," said the Vicar, "that was a terrible tragedy,—and the shadow of it hangs over them still. I do not know a more joyless face than Mrs. Kingsworth's, and there is a stern unwillingness to identify herself with the place, which is very noticeable."

"Yes, she is not gracious," said Walter. "Poor thing! I do not wonder that she shrinks from the place. Where did the—accident happen?"

"The bodies were found at the foot of the rocks in that little cove below Kingsworth Park."

"I think I'll walk round that way and see it," said Walter Kingsworth with an odd sort of interest. And having parted from Mr. Clare, he took his way round the point that divided the village from the tiny cove above which Kingsworth house was built.

The tide was low, and there was a wide expanse of sand between him and the rippling sunlit waves, indeed it was only in very high tides that the water covered the rocks at all, and in the cove there was generally a strip of white sand, warm and bright in the sunshine, while the grass stretched away towards the house above. The air was soft and pleasant; great woolly clouds floated over the sky and cast long shadows on the down and on the sand. Walter Kingsworth, musing on the wild story of past sin and sorrow with which the place was connected, positively started as he saw Katharine tripping down the narrow pathway that led into the cove. She looked wonderfully fresh and full of life, with her brightly coloured hair and cheeks, and the gay smile with which she came forward to greet him.

Walter was a person whose ideas were apt to be absorbing, and he could hardly free himself from the strong impression that was on him. No words about the ball or his intended call came into his head, and he said abruptly,

"Are you fond of this place, Miss Kingsworth,—this cove I mean?" he added.

"I don't know," said Kate. "I think I am rather fond

of coming here. I like the sea. I never saw it till we came to Kingsworth,—but I like to look out far away, and see it glitter."

"I suppose most people like the sea," said Walter.

"Do they? My mother does not. She *never* walks on the shore. But then—well, you *are* my cousin, are you not? I suppose it would not be wrong to talk to you about anything belonging to the family, would it?" Katharine spoke abruptly and eagerly. And Walter replied warmly,

"Indeed I am proud to be your cousin, and you may talk quite safely to me."

This eager, round-eyed girl, with her sweet voice and abrupt manner gave him quite a new sensation.

Katharine stood a little apart from him, making holes with her parasol in the sand. "When we lived at Applehurst," she said, "I never used to think about anything except how dull it was. But since we came here—I feel puzzled. Emberance doesn't like to talk about the family. But it was here, wasn't it—that my father and hers were drowned?"

"So I have been told," said the young man with a gravity and reverence that impressed Kate, for she lowered her own voice and said,

"It is because I want to know what really happened that I talk to you."

"But I cannot tell you more than you know," said Walter, "how your father and your uncle were found drowned together. No one was there—so no one can know how it was."

"That was after my grandfather died?" said Kate, as if pondering.

"Yes,—I suppose so."

Kate was silent for a minute,—then she said, as if slightly disappointed, "Of course, if I come to think of it, you are not likely to be able to tell me anything about it. Perhaps I ought not to have asked you. Shall we come up to the house?"

Walter assented, he could not fathom what was passing in her mind; but her quick changes of mood interested him.

He paid rather a stiff visit at Kingsworth. Mrs. Kingsworth had an unreadiness of manner that was embarrassing. In truth her mind was never with the matter in hand, and just now she was full of speculation as to what would have been her feelings if this fine young man had been her son, and *his* disinheritance the sacrifice she contemplated. Kate, too, was silent, and Emberance had to bear the burden of the conversation, till Walter took his leave, saying that he hoped circumstances might again bring him into the neighbourhood, and that the two branches of the family might not again be so entirely separated.

"Mamma," said Kate, when he was gone, "we have some girl-cousins too at Silthorpe. Couldn't we ask them to stay here some time?"

"It is a great stretch to call them cousins, Katie," said Mrs. Kingsworth. "I don't see quite how we could do so."

Kate pouted a little, thinking to herself that her mother

always opposed her wishes, and finding that Emberance was deep in a piece of fancy work and unwilling to leave it, set off to finish her walk by herself.

There was no absolute embargo on solitary rambles, and though Kate well knew that her mother did not like her to walk alone in the village, in her present mood she did not feel inclined to regard an unspoken prohibition.

She turned away from the path towards the Vicarage; with a shy unwillingness to be met *there* by herself; yet her thoughts as she walked along were not wrapped in the sunny haze proper to a young maiden just awaking to a sense of preference given and received. Kate did not dream, she thought and speculated on her own life. Only her thoughts were confused and formless. "What was wrong? Why did no one answer her questions? And what questions after all did she want to ask?"

She had turned down a lane that led away from the sea; and having no special object in pursuing her walk, was about to turn back, when she was overtaken by one of the fisherwomen who sold fish about the neighbourhood. There was nothing very characteristic or picturesque about the class, they wore the ordinary dress of labouring women, except that their petticoats were very short, and they were generally as rough and ignorant as might be expected of the inhabitants of a place which had enjoyed so few advantages as Kingsworth.

This one was a handsome woman, with a keen intelligent face, and bright eyes looking out from under her flattened bonnet.

"Good morning to you, my lady," she said.

"Good morning," said Kate graciously,—she had grasped enough of her *rôle* to know that graciousness was her people's due.

"Fine weather, miss, for the time of year. Is it Miss Katharine then that I'm talking to?"

"Yes," said Kate. "And what is your name? I don't know any one, as I was never here till last September."

"Alice Taylor's my name, if you please, miss. But begging your pardon, Miss Katharine, you was here eighteen years ago, as I ought to know, as I was your nursemaid."

"Were you?" said Kate warmly. "Did you live with my mother? Where do you live now? I am sure then I might come and see you."

"Well, you see, miss, there's evil tongues everywhere, and poor servants even have their enemies. But I was as innocent as the babe unborn, of what I was accused of, and perhaps there were some that had reason to be sorry for what they did," she concluded spitefully with a glance at Kate.

"Were you accused of doing wrong?" said Kate.

"Ah, never mind, my dear young lady, it's all too long ago to go back to. And so Mr. James's daughter is staying here. She's a fine young lady. Who would have thought when Mr. James came of age how things would be?"

"What did they do when he came of age?" said Kate, with an odd sense of fascinated curiosity.

"Dear me, miss, there was such rejoicings! Dinner

for all the place, and compliments to your great-grandfather who won the place back again to the family, and Mr. James so handsome and condescending like. Mr. George, *he* was always a quiet one."

"That was *my* father?"

"Yes, miss, but he being the younger wasn't thought so much of—you'll excuse my saying so."

There was something in the tone which Katharine instinctively felt to be an impertinence, and as they came to a turn of the road she said,

"Well, good morning, Mrs. Taylor. I believe I ought to go home. I'll ask mamma if I may come and see you."

"Thank you, miss; good morning," said Mrs. Taylor civilly enough.

Katharine hurried home, full of her new subject.

"Oh, mamma," she cried, "I have met a woman who says she was my nurse! Alice was her name—and now she is Mrs. Taylor. She says she was suspected of doing something wrong; but that it was not true. Do you remember her?"

"Your nurse," said Mrs. Kingsworth briefly, "turned out dishonest. She took a pair of my gold earrings, and was dismissed."

"But, mamma, she says that she was accused falsely. Won't you go and hear what she has to say?"

"My dear, after all these years it would be impossible to renew the subject. Besides, she did take the earrings. I forget the details now; but there was no doubt of it at the time. She was not a desirable person."

"I think she was angry with us about it," said Kate.

"Possibly. She had no right to speak to you at all."

Kate did not feel inclined to repeat all Alice Taylor's remarks, and indeed was more easily silenced than usual; but the incident added its quota to the weight on her mind. She felt quite sure that Alice Taylor believed her to be the wrong woman in the wrong place.

CHAPTER XI.

COMING TO AN UNDERSTANDING.

EMBERANCE meanwhile had her own troubles. Not that her thoughts took the same line as Katharine's; she had never vexed herself about her supposed wrongs, and was much too fond of Kate to begin to do so now. But her love story was a trial to her, and in a very unromantic way. She was a young lively girl, with bright spirits and the readiest interest in all the affairs of life, not raised by character or education above the ordinary temptations of gay young girlhood. At the same time she loved Malcolm Mackenzie honestly and truly, she looked forward to marrying him and to quitting friends and country for his sake, and could she have enjoyed all the little pleasures of her engagement, have received Malcolm's letters, and have talked about him to Kate, she would hardly have felt the strain of it.

But she longed for tidings of Malcolm, she thought about it, she was vaguely unhappy when the sea was rough, read all the information about New Zealand that she could find, and often felt that she never could be

happy till the silence between them was ended. And yet she was young and bright, and everything around her was enjoyable, would have been *so* enjoyable, if the thought of Malcolm had not come to damp it. It seemed so hard that she could not feel free to be happy, that for years and years there must be a shadow on the comfortable commonplace days, filled with little cares and little pleasures that otherwise would have satisfied her so well.

Perhaps the trial would not have taken this form in a more elevated nature, nor was it quite the reason for which Malcolm Mackenzie pitied his far-off love when he thought of all the sorrows of separation; but it was quite compatible in Emberance with a most honest affection for him. She was to go home in time for Christmas, and at home would be much more likely to pick up fragments of intelligence. As to encouraging other admirers, Emberance knew her duty too well to think of such a thing, and of course the little attentions that young men paid were of no serious consequence; still Emberance was not unaware that just for the purposes of a dance or a game of tennis, an idle chat or occasional joke, she and not Kate had the superior attraction. Even Major Clare—and here Emberance's little bit of self-sufficient fancy was interrupted by a sudden sense of the change in Kate's ways and manner—she had been sitting over her pretty fancy-work one morning in the drawing-room at Kingsworth, letting her thoughts have their way according as the tossing waves suggested one set of images or the spire of the village church another.

Was Kate really beginning to care for the Major's dark face, with its *nonchalant* expression, and quaint dark eyes, and was he at all serious in the constant attention that he was beginning to pay her? Emberance had knowledge enough of the world to think that if so certain side words and glances towards herself had better have been omitted. She was well aware, too, that Katharine had other attractions beside her *beaux yeux*. Not for any little triumph of her own vanity would she have disturbed "anything *real*" on its way to Kate; but she was shrewd, and had her doubts of the reality, while Kate's blushes and consciousness attracted the more attention from her ordinary open and unsentimental manner.

Emberance wondered as she sat and worked, whether such an idea had ever occurred to Mrs. Kingsworth. She looked up and watched her aunt as she sat reading —Kate had been sent into another room to perform the hour's practice which her mother still required of her— and thought that she would try delicately to find out.

"Christmas will soon be here, Aunt Mary," she said, "I am afraid I am much too sorry to go home."

"My dear, I wish I could keep you over Christmas," said Mrs. Kingsworth, with more warmth than usual. "I don't know what Katie will do without you. She always pined for a companion, and I am glad she is gratified at last."

"I shall miss her very much," said Emberance. "But after all she won't be quite solitary. There are the Clares, and she likes Minnie very much."

"Yes, the Clares are lady-like girls, but there are difficulties in close intimacies with strangers."

"I think," said Emberance, feeling very doubtful of her ground, "that Kate gets on well with every one. Mr. and Miss Deane like her as well as the Clares do, and Minnie was telling me the other day that if ever they made plans for an expedition without us, her uncle was sure to manage for us to be included."

"Her uncle! Major Clare? Indeed!" said Mrs. Kingsworth.

She made no further remark at the moment, but after a pause, during which she turned over no leaf of her book, she said,

"Major Clare's leave is a very long one?"

"Yes, he has some months of it yet left, I believe," returned Emberance. "He met with an accident, you know, and that is why he came home."

Mrs. Kingsworth said no more. The idea that Kate's future conduct would be hampered by a marriage engagement was a very old one to her; but under the immediate pressure of adjusting her conduct to the difficulties of the situation it had passed out of her mind. Now it returned, and gave a sudden start to her resolution. Fear of disappointment had hitherto held her silent, fear of consequences now urged her to speak. Kate should know all, and her mother would know of what stuff the girl was made at last.

Without saying a word to Emberance, she rose from her seat and went in search of her daughter.

The morning-room in which Kate was had been Mrs.

Kingsworth's favourite sitting-room long ago, and was as cheerful a room as any in the house, with white panels and a carved cornice, and long windows that looked towards the village. Kate liked it, and would fain have sat there every day, but it had too many associations for Mrs. Kingsworth to endure it.

Kate had left off playing and was standing at the long narrow window looking down the road. Her eyes were absent and dreamy, her figure still; there was a look of repose about her, a content in quiet and inaction that was a new thing. Her rosy cheeks deepened a little in colour and her lips smiled, as much a contrast to the intense purpose in her mother's pale, clear-cut face, as her blue dress with its girlish fashionable cut, was to the black, soberly made garments which Mrs. Kingsworth would never lay aside.

"Katharine."

"Yes, mamma."

Kate started, and looked guilty, probably expecting to be reproved for idling.

"I have practised for an hour," she said.

Mrs. Kingsworth sat down and laid her hands together in her lap.

"I have something to say to you," she began. "I have made up my mind to tell you certain facts which have been hitherto concealed from you."

Kate looked startled and attentive, and her mother continued.

"You will feel quite sure, Katie, that what I tell you is absolutely true?"

"Oh, yes," said Kate, surprised at such a question.

"It will be so. I shall not think it right to soften facts because of our relation to those concerned."

"I want to hear," said Kate, with a throbbing heart.

"Your uncle James," said Mrs. Kingsworth, "was, of course, your grandfather's natural heir. He was not a well-principled person, and displeased him by debts and other bad habits. My husband was of a steadier nature, and was his father's favourite. After my marriage I found that in many ways he was James' enemy, and made the worst of him to his father, whose preference he valued, I believe, from mercenary motives."

"Mamma!" gasped Kate, with a frightened sob, "Oh, he could not—"

"I know that he did. James married secretly, and your grandfather conceived the idea that his choice was very discreditable."

"What—Aunt Ellen?"

"Yes. Your father, though well aware that she was respectably connected and well conducted, concealed the fact, so that your grandfather, under a false impression, made his will in George's favour,—in your father's favour. Do you understand?"

Kate's answer was unexpected.

"Mother,—how do you know?" she said abruptly, with a sort of instinctive defiance.

"Because after your grandfather's sudden death, James accused my husband of having received an explanatory letter to lay before his father. I found that letter and read it."

"Did you ask him?"

"No, Kate, he and his brother were beyond the reach of questions then. Now you know why Kingsworth is hateful to me, and why I have no pleasure in any of the advantages it brings you."

Poor Kate was stunned and startled, conscious chiefly of the instinctive effort to check a flood of tears.

"But Uncle James *was* a wicked man," she said vehemently.

"How does that alter it? Let him have been ever so wicked or ever so weak, he was wronged, he and his child, by your father."

"Emberance!"

"Emberance. You stand in her place."

Mrs. Kingsworth's tones were quiet and distinct, she looked intently at Kate, the characters of the old actors in the drama were nothing to her compared to how her child would come out of this terrible test.

Katharine's shocked, sobbing agitation could not be pitiful to her, it was so welcome as a sign of feeling.

"I don't believe my father meant it. Oh, mamma, *you* shouldn't have thought he meant it," said the girl at last.

"Kate," said Mrs. Kingsworth, "love never blinded my eyes, and I cannot sacrifice principles to persons. The facts are as I have told you. This property is yours only through a dishonourable action. But for that Emberance would be the heiress of Kingsworth, and you, as my daughter, would still be far enough removed from any chance of poverty."

"Mamma, do people *know*?" sobbed Kate at last. "Do the Clares,—do people know?"

"I imagine that there was an impression of some scandal: but as there was no question of your father's *legal* right, the neighbourhood could only accept the facts. But Kate," Mrs. Kingsworth continued, with more hurry of manner, "I never cared much for what people think. To respect those near to me, is to me the one thing needful. When I found of what my husband was capable, all the charm of life was gone for me. I have tried very hard to bring up my daughter pure from such a taint. You are a free agent, your actions are your own, but oh, Katie! what is there to compare to right and truth?"

The tears gathered in Mrs. Kingsworth's dark eyes, she could hardly command her voice, her whole frame trembled as she felt how inadequate her carefully governed words were to describe the anguish that had come to the proud high-minded girl in the discovery that she had thrown away the love of her youth, the sense of stain and injury that had clung to her ever since, till in her lonely musings the offence against *her* sense of honour, *her* conscience had shut out all pity for the offender.

Now she loyally kept her promise to the Canon not to make any suggestion to her daughter, but she felt as if her very life hung on the turn Katharine's thoughts might take, on what she might say next. But Kate had not come to the point of perceiving that any particular line of action could be expected of her. Her vague

misgivings were painfully realised, yet having often experienced her mother's severe judgment, she took refuge in a sort of instinctive doubt of the truth of her impressions.

"Did—did Uncle James make friends with papa before they were drowned?" she faltered.

"No one can tell," said Mrs. Kingsworth, solemnly. "They went out in the foggy evening, and in the morning they were found at the foot of the rocks,—together. We must live, Kate, under the shadow of that awful doubt. But if the sense of sharing the sin were gone, *that* I could bear."

"Mamma, mamma, oh, what can it mean? Oh, I cannot bear,—I cannot bear—"

She started up to run out of the room, but the shock and the horror were too much for her. She turned helpless and dizzy, and fell half-fainting into her mother's arms. Mrs. Kingsworth was startled into a sudden sense of the present. She called for help, took Kate to her room, and tended her carefully till she was better.

"My poor child," she said with unusual gentleness, "I did not mean to startle you so much. I forgot the newness of it."

But Kate turned away from her and hid her face. "Let me alone, mamma," was all she said, "let me alone."

Mrs. Kingsworth turned away and left the room. She experienced the sort of relief that follows on having reached a long-dreaded crisis. The point in her life had come, and as is often the case, neither of the alterna-

tives which she had expected had taken place. Kate had not shown herself careless and indifferent, nor had she seen at once what Mrs. Kingsworth thought of supreme importance, her own share in the responsibility. Would she take refuge in perverse disbelief?

Poor Katharine was hardly conscious of distinct thoughts at all. The horrible tragedy at which her mother had hinted shocked and terrified her. How fearful an ending to the two lives. Under the suspicion of this more terrible crime she could not realise any responsibility for her father's wrong-doing. The puzzles of her life were all explained now. Her girlhood had passed as in an enchanted sleep, shut in from cares and interests and responsibilities. Now she awoke with the sudden shock, the spell of her unthinking childhood was rudely broken, and the real Katharine came, as it were, to life.

She did not feel her inheritance a burden, nor think herself, at least in those first moments, responsible for her father's sin. She did not think of ridding herself of her ill-gotten riches, but as the first shock subsided a little it did occur to her that Emberance was wronged. "It ought to be hers," she said vaguely to herself, and then the thought was swept away by a sense of anger with her mother, "who was so *sure* papa had been wicked—who did not care if people knew it—oh, did Major Clare know it?" Kate hid her face in her hands and sobbed aloud.

CHAPTER XII.

RESPONSIBILITY.

THE stir and the running up and down stairs caused by Katharine's illness at length attracted Emberance's attention, and she came out of the drawing-room to see what was the matter just as Mrs. Kingsworth came down stairs.

"Kate has not been quite well," she said. "I have been talking to her on very painful subjects, and she has been greatly upset."

"May I go to her?" said Emberance eagerly.

"Oh, yes; she may be more willing to express her own view of the matter to you than to me. But she showed real feeling."

Emberance ran up stairs into her cousin's room. Kate was lying on her back, with her hands twisted together and pressed against her forehead. She was sobbing and overcome with a passion of misery quite beyond her control.

"Oh, Katie, my darling, what is it? Don't cry so terribly. Tell me what it all means," cried Emberance, with warm kisses.

Kate threw her arms round her, and buried her face in her neck, till the violent agitation subsided a little, and Kate murmured, "Oh, Emmy, is it true about the drowning? Have you known it—always?"

"We don't know anything, you know, Katie," said Emberance gently, "only that there was an accident."

"But mamma thinks—oh, I don't know *what* she thinks."

"Uncle Kingsworth told me once that it was better not to think about it at all. He said that we had no right to entertain dreadful suspicions of either."

Emberance spoke very gravely: but with a matter-of-course quietness that was the greatest possible contrast to Kate's excited horror.

"I shall never forget it! never get it out of my mind! Emmy, does every one *know?*"

"I suppose they know as much as we do," said Emberance.

Katharine was silent for a moment, then burst out again. "But Uncle James *was* wicked—ah, I forgot he is *your* father—oh it is all dreadful, every way."

"You see, Kate," said Emberance, "the way I have got to look on it is this. I expect that neither my father nor yours were exactly—good. Of course it would be much better and happier if we could look back on them as other girls do; but as we can't, and as it isn't our fault in any way, why should we let it spoil our lives altogether? We have got our mothers and—and other people to care about, and it's not our fault."

"But—mother says that you ought to have all the

money, that it ought not to be mine. How could I help that?"

"As to that," said Emberance resolutely, "I was always determined that all those fancies should not spoil my life. I got quite tired of the subject long ago. Grandfather Kingsworth had a perfect right to do what he liked with the place; and if my father had had it, why Kitty, I don't think there would have been much left now, and that's the truth. I am very happy, and so may you be. Don't think about it at all."

Emberance's common sense sounded flat to Katharine's excited spirits; but the words were consolatory, for she had by no means realised that she could alter the past arrangement by any act of hers. She turned away, and while she coloured to her ears, whispered, "But Emmy, would any one—ever—like girls, with such a story belonging to them?"

"Yes!" cried Emberance, "they would! They *do*, Kitty. It didn't make *any* difference."

Kate looked up surprised and curious, and Emberance blushed in her turn and laughed. "I mustn't tell," she said, "but there wasn't any occasion to be an heiress, it all came right, and so it will—would—for you."

"I know *now* why you don't mind. I shouldn't either," said Kate slowly, after a pause.

She did not ask any more questions, and her agitation subsided; while to her mother's intense disappointment, she said nothing more of what had passed. She was, however, much altered, and was meek and quiet, clinging much to Emberance during the next few days, and

evidently needing her caressing kindness. For Kate had no idea that she had any character for independence to keep up; and as her *brusquerie* had been perfectly natural, so, with her changed mood was her increased softness.

It so happened that both Major Clare and his nieces were away for a few days; so that the Kingsworths were left much to themselves, and Kate formed and acted on a resolution. She was hardly conscious that she did not fully trust her mother's views of the past; but she proved that she had some idea of independent judgment and action by writing to her uncle Canon Kingsworth a little letter that much surprised the kind old man. She said,—

"My dear Uncle,

"Mamma has told me lately all that passed about this property, and also all that she believes about the death of my father and uncle. I think I ought to know all that really happened, that I may know what to think. Will you please tell me?

"I am your loving and dutiful niece," (Kate had been brought up to old-fashioned respectfulness,)

"Katharine Kingsworth."

This letter cost the Canon much consideration, and at first he thought that he would answer it in person; but finally decided that the safest way was to leave Kate's mind to work the matter out for itself, without exposing himself to questions that he might not know

how to answer. So after a day or two of suspense, Katharine received the following answer.

"My dear Katharine,

"I feel deeply for the pain which you are now suffering, and which I am afraid I can in no way lessen; for sin brings sorrow in its train even upon one so innocent as yourself. Your mother has told you doubtless the actual facts, and I earnestly recommend you to draw from them no further inferences; but for your satisfaction I will repeat what passed.

"Your uncle James was a great trial to your grandfather, and I know that he had long considered him unworthy of the position of his eldest son. But so far as we know, he finally decided on disinheriting him from a misconception of your Aunt Ellen's character and circumstances, and this misconception your father failed to remove when it lay in his power to do so. But remember, the time was so short that he may have been only waiting for a favourable opportunity. On the day of your grandfather's funeral there was a painful dispute between your uncle and your father, and they left the house separately and in deep anger. As you know, they were found close together at the foot of the cliff, and it is your duty as a daughter to imagine no more than you know. They died together, and may God in His mercy pardon the sins of both! This terrible sorrow has been less painful to your mother than the sense of the wrong committed. With regard to your own position and heirship it is perfectly safe and legal, and at the present moment it is

your duty so to train yourself that when you come of age you may fitly perform the duties to which you are called, whatever you then find that they may be. I mean that you are called upon in an especial manner to be just and unselfish, and to regard the position of owner of Kingsworth as a trust for the welfare of those dependent on the place, to keep your heart from worldliness, and to consider the trials from which your mother has suffered. You have been, perhaps, more than usually childish for your years; it behoves you now to learn to use your own judgment, and to act according to the dictates of your own conscience. May GOD bless you, my dear little girl, and give you that loyalty of spirit and charity of judgment which you so sorely need. So prays

"Your loving uncle,

"GEORGE KINGSWORTH."

Katharine read this letter alone in her own room, and its solemn call to self-reliance and self-discipline fell on her heart with a dreadful weight. She did not understand it. She had failed to grasp the meaning of the wistful looks her mother cast on her out of the dark stern eyes from which she had always shrunk, she did not realise even yet that a great restoration was or would be in her power. If she had she would have been ready enough to fling away the burden and to forget the pain. Is that all? she might have said, if any one had told her so to atone for her father's sins, if *that* would have given back the freedom of her spirit. Comfort and competence and all the little pleasures that were so sweet to her would be as

much within her power as ever, and that sacrifice if she could have realised the possibility of it, would have seemed just then no sacrifice at all, a fact of which the old Canon had perhaps had some suspicion.

She read her letter over again, and her mind fastened on the sentence in which he seemed to suggest the possibility of her father's intentions having been all straightforward. "*Mother* might believe that," she thought. "If it were so why should she trouble?"

"I won't. I'll forget it!" said Kate suddenly to herself, and she put the Canon's letter into her pocket, and running down stairs, began to chatter eagerly to Emberance about the trimming of a new dress. Emberance was very glad to have her cheerful, and as she could not see the use of fretting for Kate any more than for herself, seconded her with great readiness.

Mrs. Kingsworth heard her laughing, and marvelled. Nothing but her solemn promise to the Canon would have induced her to abstain from influencing Kate, or at least from stating her own view of the matter, but she would have suffered any evil sooner than break her word, so she contented herself by influencing Kate in another way, by praying for her. She never cast her prayers but in one form, that Kate might give up the estate to Emberance, and into that petition she threw her whole soul; but it surely might be that her earnest desire for her child's honour and honesty would work its own fulfilment, if not precisely in the way she believed to be the only possible one.

Walter Kingsworth meanwhile had returned to Sil-

thorpe with his head full of his family history. He described Kingsworth to his father and mother, discovered a likeness in his favourite sister Eva to Katharine, and declared that he thought the complete separation of the two branches of the family to be a great mistake.

"Mrs. George Kingsworth has lived in such complete retirement ever since her husband's death that no intercourse would have been possible," said his mother.

"When the place was in the market," said his father, "our branch of the family were not in circumstances to be able to buy it, though it went very cheap. And indeed it is not much of a property, and a very poor house. There is scarcely any land beyond the village."

"You have seen it then, father?" said Walter.

"Oh, yes. I went over there when it was standing empty eighteen years ago, and when the story of the drowning of the brothers was fresh. I made a few inquiries."

"And did you discover anything?"

"No, there was nothing to discover. I think the family were too ready to take up an attitude of mystery about it. Mrs. George is a peculiar woman."

"She is very handsome, and distinguished-looking," said Walter.

"Ah, I never saw her. The long minority must have greatly improved the estate, which had suffered from James' debts; but the land is poor, and the cottages on it much out of order."

Walter was a good deal struck by his father's knowledge of the circumstances of the family when he had

himself supposed that the old relationship was entirely forgotten. But then Mr. Kingsworth's opinions and affairs were often a source of surprise, as he was extremely reserved, and practised quiet shrewd habits of observation which often bore unexpected fruit. Walter's visit revived the subject in the minds of the family, and his sisters Eva and Maud and the little Emberance were full of curiosity about the south-country cousins. They were lively, clever girls, highly educated and full of schemes and occupations, and they thought Walter had made very little use of his opportunities of observation in not discovering whether Kate was literary or artistic, parochial or strong-minded.

"You can only say that she has round eyes," said Eva, one morning at breakfast, when the subject came up again, some weeks after Walter's visit to the south.

"I only saw her twice," said Walter. "I shouldn't think her 'line' was strongly developed as yet."

"Walter may have another opportunity of judging if he likes," said his father. "That Horton business, Walter—some one is required to be on the spot. Should you care to find yourself at Blackchurch?—it is only a few miles from Kingsworth."

"I shall be very glad to go if you think it necessary," said Walter, indifferently.

And he went, though somehow his sisters could extract no more enthusiasm from him on the subject of the south-country cousins. But when he came to Blackchurch he speedily made his arrival known to Mrs. Deane, and received from her an invitation to a dinner

party, to which Mrs. Kingsworth had consented to take the girls, though she wondered at Katharine's willingness to go to it. Mrs. Kingsworth dressed as for a necessary and wearisome duty, Kate with an eager effort to escape from present pain, and Emberance with a certain lingering pleasure in an amount of luxury and amusement which the narrower circle and more pressing duties of home would soon render impossible to her.

To their great surprise their first sight on entering Mrs. Deane's drawing-room was Walter Kingsworth's bright eyes and kind frank face.

"My father had some business in this neighbourhood, and kindly discovered that my presence was essential to the proper performance of it," he said gaily, as he shook hands with them. "I did not at all object to the arrangement."

Kate was very glad to see him, the sense of kinship was strong within her, and as she was both too much preoccupied and too simple to have any consciousness with regard to him, she was openly glad that he took her in to dinner, and was soon talking freely to him about his home and his sisters.

It struck Emberance, as she sat opposite, that there was a little more than cousinly eagerness in Walter's manner, the dawning of an interest in the bright friendly open-faced girl, which might grow and deepen.

In truth, Walter was aware of liking Kate exceedingly, and was thinking that she had grown prettier and more interesting since his last visit, with feeling and expression that made her brown eyes less like a bird's and more

like a woman's. He speculated too upon the blush with which she answered some question about Major Clare's absence, and decided within himself that that *blasé* man of the world was entirely unworthy of a fresh-hearted innocent girl like Katharine. He remembered her confidence down on the rocks, and felt that he would like much to obtain a renewal of it. As he was not now staying with the Deanes his movements were free; and on Sunday he came to Church at Kingsworth, observing with pleasure that Major Clare's place in the vicarage pew was still vacant. As he had walked four or five miles, it occurred even to Mrs. Kingsworth to ask him to lunch, and while in the brightness of a mild winter Sunday they walked home across the park, Kate too remembered her childish impulse of confiding her fears to her "relation," and felt how much more difficult words would be now on a subject that had grown so extremely serious. Yet she should like to know how the situation would strike Walter. The Canon did not, she thought, write freely to her; she could not, except under great stress of feeling, discuss the matter with Emberance, and of her mother's stern, clear view she had an instinctive dread.

Emberance had promised to take Miss Clare's class at the Sunday school in the afternoon—a piece of usefulness forbidden to Kate, and when she was gone silence and stiffness fell on the little party. Natural disposition and the long habit of seclusion alike made entertaining a stranger almost intolerable to Mrs. Kingsworth, and all her rigid views of chaperonage did not prevent her from

going to dress for afternoon service, some ten minutes before there was any occasion to do so.

Both Kate and Walter were full of the same thought, and they had not been alone five minutes before something was said of the rocks, where they met before, then a conscious silence, then an impetuous speech from Kate.

"I know all about it now!"

"Then," said Walter, "you see that I *could* not answer your questions. I have been afraid so often since that you thought me cold and unfeeling."

"No; I didn't think about that at all. But I was puzzled and ashamed."

"No—no," he said eagerly, "you must not feel as if *you* were guilty. What chance have you had, a child—and kept ignorant of it all—of feeling the wrong or doing anything to rectify it?"

"Rectify it? How could I? It is all done."

Walter could have bitten his tongue out for his imprudence.

"Oh, I did not mean to make a suggestion," he said hurriedly.

"Every one means something they will not say. What? do you mean that I could give it back to Emberance?"

"No—no—I meant nothing. I have no right to say anything of the kind to you."

"But you can tell me what you would do in my place. Could you give it up? would you give it up?"

"I don't know. How can I tell how I should act

under such a trial?" said Walter, feeling himself in a great scrape.

"But do you think a good person would give it up? Would that make it all right again? Walter, I *will* know if you think it would be right."

"Well, yes, for myself—for a perfectly independent agent—I think I should not find much satisfaction in keeping it—I hope not. But a lady—that is perhaps different."

"Why!" said Kate, to his great surprise, as her mother's step sounded, "that would be very easy! I did not know that I could!"



CHAPTER XIII.

THE REAL SACRIFICE.

MAJOR Clare sat by the fire in his brother's study at the Vicarage, smoking a cigar, and reflecting on the course of events. He had gone from home with a half intention of delaying that course of events, and he had returned with another half intention of precipitating it.

With much affection on both sides, he was getting tired of his stay at the Vicarage, and his brother's family were perhaps beginning to feel that they had suited all their arrangements to him for a long enough time.

"It would be such a good thing for Robert to marry and settle," and Robert himself thought so too. It was many a long year since that great unsettlement had come to him when things had gone wrong with his first hopes, and he could not have the girl he wanted. He had tried to fall in love several times since, and he was trying now, moved certainly by Kate's fair fortune, and yet not quite mercenary enough to be indifferent to the want of spon-

taneous pleasure in his wooing. If either face could have recalled to him that never-forgotten one, it would not have been Kate's. He had idly wished that the cousins would change places in the beginning of their acquaintance, but he could not allow himself to wish it now; and had indeed fully made up his mind to the piece of good fortune that seemed to have fallen at his feet—only, he was not in a hurry to secure it. Nevertheless it was dull, and he should like to see Kate blush and brighten at the sight of him.

So he discovered that Minnie wanted to go up to Kingsworth, and prepared to escort her thither.

Walter Kingsworth meanwhile had been seized with a fit of compunction and alarm, at the idea he had suggested to the unprepared mind of his cousin; the lawyer and the man of business awoke within him, as he reflected on the responsibility he had incurred in driving to a hasty resolution a girl so inexperienced as Kate.

He reflected on this, it is to be feared, all through the afternoon service to which he accompanied his cousins, and afterwards as they walked along the road till their ways divided, he caught a chance of saying,

"Miss Kingsworth, you must not suppose I meant to say that any special line of conduct is incumbent on you. So imperfectly knowing the circumstances, how can I judge?"

"You can't put the idea out of my head, now that you have put it in, cousin Walter," said Kate, with blunt gravity. "But I shall not be of age for thirteen months, so I have plenty of time to think about it."

And she did think about it with a new reticence that proved her to be, after all, her mother's daughter. Slowly she recognised that she must make her own decision, that she did stand alone. She read her uncle's letter over again, and saw that it was framed so as not to exclude the possibility of any decision. She was still child enough not to care very much about the position she would sacrifice, "for I might make mamma promise not to go back to Applehurst," she thought, but the view that came to her most forcibly, perhaps from a sort of unconscious opposition to the pressure of her mother's feelings, was that by declaring herself the false heiress, she might be doing a wrong to her father's memory. "It would make people *sure* he had cheated, and perhaps, after all, he did not," she thought, and then suddenly there came over her hard struggle for wisdom and sense, a thought so sweet, so absorbing, that all her trouble seemed to melt away in the warmth of it. *If* Major Clare were her lover, then *he* would know what was right. If she could tell *him*—poor Kate's heart went out with a yearning longing desire, and it never struck her then that in honour, he ought to be told of her doubts if ever in real truth he were her lover. Never—till in some novel that she was reading, the plot turned on such a concealment.

"Should I be a 'villain' if I didn't tell him that perhaps I mean to give it up?" she thought. "Dear me, I had no idea how easy it was to be wicked! How he would despise me!"

Poor Katharine had not much notion of that other and Higher Counsel, which her uncle's letter had ad-

vised her to seek. She had been taught to be dutiful and reverent; but it did not occur to her that "saying her prayers" would help her in her present trouble, though as she scrupulously asked in the unaltered language of her childhood to be "made good," and helped to obey her mother, she found perhaps more guidance than she knew.

And then Major Clare came back, and in the glow and brightness of his increased attention, Kate was too happy to think of anything else, definitely or long. Emberance was wide awake now, and scrupulously careful not to interfere, and as Minnie and Rosa Clare were equally on the alert, opportunities did not lack. To go to the Vicarage and help to cover books for the Lending Library was a piece of parochial usefulness that even Mrs. Kingsworth could not forbid to her young ladies, and if Uncle Bob did hang about with his newspaper, till he finally discarded it, and pasted and papered, with a firmness and handiness astonishing to the young ladies, it could only be regarded as good nature to his nieces—nay, between dining-room and drawing-room, mixing paste and getting afternoon tea, if a tête-à-tête could have been avoided, at least it did not seem unnatural.

Not unnatural, only intensely important, more important than anything in the world to Kate, and strangely silencing and embarrassing to the Major, as he looked at the little figure kneeling on the hearth-rug, stroking the Vicarage cat, with the firelight reddening and brightening her hair, and the uncertain light or her uncertain feeling, softening her fresh rosy face.

"Well," said Major Clare, "I never thought to paste my fingers in Rosa's service."

"You paste better than any of us."

"Masculine superiority?"

"I suppose so," said the straightforward Kate.

"Do you think it has been a very dull day?" said Major Clare, coming nearer, and leaning his arms on the mantlepiece, "though we have been employed in such a dull occupation?"

"I haven't been dull at all."

"Nor I. Kate, do you think I have been pasting books to please Rosa?"

"Haven't you?"

"No, indeed—shall I tell you what brought me? shall I tell you what I hope may be the end of a wandering homeless life?"

She looked up with that in her eyes, which, had he met them, must have brought the scene to a point at once, and given it a very different ending. But he was looking into the fire, and went on with a sort of sense that explanation was her due—went on talking of himself. "There has always been a great want in my life, and I'm grown old. I want to tell you something that a younger fellow would have got out in half the time. Has a battered old soldier any right to think his story would interest *you*?"

"I don't think you're old," said Kate, abruptly, "but I ought, I want to tell you something first."

Poor child, in the last word she showed that she understood him, as half with a longing for his counsel,

half with a sense of honour towards himself, she said, "You know, I suppose, all the story about my father and Emberance's."

"I do not care a straw for old scandals."

"They're not scandals, at least mamma says it is true. So I am not sure if when I come of age—I ought not to give it back—I haven't decided. But they say it is mine only through—a cheat."

"Who has filled your mind with such a ridiculous scruple?" exclaimed the Major in rather unlover-like tones.

"No one, but I haven't decided, only if I do decide that Kingsworth ought to belong to Emberance, I shall give it to her. That's all."

She spoke with a blunt simplicity, that jarred on Major Clare. If she had been woman enough to care for him, he thought she could not have checked his love tale with her scruple. She paused, half choked with the effort of speaking, and a sudden whirl of temptation seized the Major's soul—Emberance! Emberance the heiress! What then? What did the child mean? *Was* there a flaw in her title? He hesitated and was silent, and forgot that the child was a woman after all, though in her very simplicity unable to understand a doubt.

She saw the test that she had never meant for a test, tell its tale. She knew the sacrifice that honour demanded, she knew *how* she must suffer for her father's sin.

"He only cared for Kingsworth!" she thought, "he doesn't love *me!*" and without giving Major Clare a

moment's time to achieve the self-conquest, on which he would probably have resolved, without letting him adjust his thoughts or his feelings, she sprang up from the hearth-rug.

"You needn't tell me the rest of your story now. I don't want to hear any more of it. I shall go to tea," and she fled from him before he could say a word. She threw away her chance, where an older or more prudent woman would have kept it. The question was if it were worth keeping. He did not rush after her, and catch her, and silence all her doubts with one vehement protest, but he stamped his foot with anger at her impatience and want of confidence, and believed that he would have been true to her had she given him the chance.

Kate rushed into the drawing-room because it was the easiest way of escape from him, and not till she was there in the midst of the group of girls did she become conscious that she was trembling, and almost sobbing, hardly able to make a pretence of composure.

"Where's Uncle Bob?" said Minnie.

Kate murmured something about the dining-room. Emberance glanced at her, and said,

"Kitty, we mustn't stay for tea, it is so dark, let us go home. Come,—come and put your hat on."

Rosa and Minnie were not so utterly devoid of expectation that "something might have happened," as to offer any objection to this proposal, and Kate hurried away with scarcely a word of farewell. She sped along the lane, still in silence, and Emberance thought it better not to speak to her, though much at a loss to know what

could have passed. Surely no happy emotion could take such a form as this, such bitter sobs could not come of any mere excitement and agitation.

"Kitty, my darling," she said at length, "what has happened to you?"

Kate turned round on her, and said passionately and bitterly,

"*Nothing!*"

"Nothing?"

"No—but oh! I hate myself, and despise myself! I wish I could drown myself," cried Katharine in her agony.

"Have you quarrelled with Major Clare?"

"No!"

"Refused him?"

"No—oh no!" cried Kate, "never, never speak about him any more."

Her grief was so violent, and in its free expression seemed so childish, that Emberance had no scruple in following her to her room, and in trying to soothe and comfort her; and for some minutes Kate sat with her head on her cousin's lap, and sobbed as if her heart would break. At last she seemed to gather herself together, ceased crying, and sat up, gazing into the fire with a strange dreary look, as the quivering mouth grew still and set itself into harder lines.

"Emmy," she said, "I've been a silly girl. He doesn't care for *me*, he liked Kingsworth."

"I don't think you have been at all silly in thinking Major Clare liked you. Any one would have thought so," said Emberance, warmly.

Kate turned and kissed her, while Emberance went on.

"But how can you tell—how can you possibly tell that he doesn't really care about you? What makes you think so?"

"I don't think I can tell you," said Kate; "but I do know that he meant—meant to marry me because—I was rich. No, I cannot tell you how I found it out."

"Oh, Kitty, are you sure? I don't think it can have been *all* that."

"Well, it is enough if it was *partly* that," said Kate disdainfully, "I will never listen to him any more."

Emberance was puzzled, she could not tell how the discovery had come about, and moreover, she guessed that the facts were more complicated than Kate supposed. She saw that Kate was angry, and sore, and miserable, full of pain and disappointment; but she doubted if the very depths of her heart had been touched, thinking that if so, she would have been more ready to find excuses for her lover.

"Kate," she said, "sometimes *I* have felt doubtful whether Major Clare was quite in earnest. I think he is rather a flirt, do you know?"

"No, he is a fortune-hunter," said Kate, with great decision. She cried again as she spoke. It was a bitter experience even if it might have been bitterer still.

"Mamma is right," she said, "it *is* hateful to be rich or to care about it."

She kept her secret, Emberance could not tell what had passed, and Kate never told her, and never talked about her disappointment any more. She held her

tongue, and felt brave and strong in her anger. Her mother hoped that the change in her ways showed that she was reflecting on her position altogether, and Kate said no word, not even when she heard that Major Clare had gone away on another visit. She was too straightforward to have expected him to try again to "deceive her," as she called it; but as she stood alone, and looked out towards the Vicarage, there came over the poor child all in a minute the weariest feeling of wishing that he had. There came to her a moment, when if Major Clare had been beside her and spoken tenderly to her again, she would not have cared about asking the reason, would not, could not have turned away,—a moment when all her scruples seemed utterly valueless, compared to the love that they had cost her. Kate could not know that the sick pain of that hour of ungratified yearning was a light price to pay for the inheritance of her mother's honesty which had saved her from her mother's fate.



CHAPTER XIV.

MOTHER AND DAUGHTER.

MAJOR Clare did not come back to the Vicarage, and Minnie and Rosa ceased to talk much of him to their friend. Katharine never knew with what explanation he had satisfied his family as to the cessation of their intercourse, nor for that matter did his nieces, while "She won't do, Charley, I can't work it this time," had been the brief explanation with which he had disappointed his brother's hopes on his behalf. The Vicar feared that Miss Kingsworth must be disappointed, and his daughters were sure of it, as they observed the change in Kate's girlish gaiety. After much debate as to whether matters had gone far enough for a word or two of explanation to be Katharine's due, Mrs. Clare, a kind gentle person, resolved on confiding to Emberance the story of Major Clare's youthful disappointment, as the kindest way to both parties of accounting for his supposed vacillation, ending with, "You see, my dear, he never can forget poor Alice, who was made to refuse him because of his poor prospects. And then his manners are so engaging."

"I think," said the prudent Emberance, with due regard for her cousin's dignity, "that Katharine found out the nature of Major Clare's attentions for herself. I don't think he altered or dropped them. I believe her mind is quite made up. And she is very young. I don't at all think Aunt Mary would wish her to marry yet," concluded Emberance, as if she had been Kate's maiden aunt at least.

Mrs. Clare, a little embarrassed, murmured something about "a little passing experience," and Emberance, after some hesitation, decided on telling Kate what had been said.

"Oh yes," said Kate, quietly, "I know all about that Alice; he told me—once, just down by Widow Sutton's gate, when we were gathering the last blackberries. He said—other things—I don't want to repeat them."

"Dear Kitty, I hope you won't be very dull and unhappy, after I have gone."

"I suppose I shall be unhappy," said Kate, "there's plenty to make me so."

She cried a little as she spoke, in a half melancholy, half impatient way.

"But you'll come after Christmas and stay with Uncle Kingsworth, and then we shall see each other again?"

"Oh yes, and I shall be as tired of Kingsworth as I used to be of Applehurst. Nothing turns out well for mamma and me."

Indeed, when Emberance, reluctantly enough, went home for Christmas, Katharine felt as if all the unsatis-

factoriness of the old Applehurst life had returned, added to the new dreariness that hung over Kingsworth.

Strange puzzle, while the mother sat longing and praying that her child might have strength to sacrifice her worldly prospects to her sense of truth, the daughter felt that the sacrifice had all been made already, and that to push the burden away would be likely to come in the light of a relief.

She had lost her lover, and had in fact discovered that she had never inspired him with any real affection; and life with her mother at Kingsworth seemed but a dreary prospect. She hated the responsibilities in which she was involved, and was altogether vexed, disappointed and unhappy.

But perhaps the very fact that life had opened to her in so many aspects all at once, had prevented one of them from being utterly overpowering. Her feelings had not had time to become full grown, and as she read a story of an utterly heart-broken maiden, she thought to herself,

"After all, I don't feel quite like *this*."

And happily, it never occurred to Kate that it was a pity that she did not.

She was quite enough to be pitied, poor little thing, under the weight of her troubles, even if her heart *was* only three quarters broken.

"I think, Katie," said her mother, one morning when she had been for some time watching her listless attitude, "that you find it as possible to be dull at Kingsworth as at Applehurst."

"I suppose," said Kate, "that one may be dull anywhere? Aren't you ever dull, mamma?"

"No," said Mrs. Kingsworth, "I don't think I am ever quite what you call dull. Of course I don't mean to say that I find life always enjoyable."

"You care more for reading and that sort of thing than I do," said Kate.

"Yes, Katie, but even a love of intellectual pursuits is not enough by itself. There is only one thing that can keep up one's interest in life,—that it should be filled by an earnest purpose."

"You mean trying to be good," said Kate, with less impatience than her mother's formal sentences awoke within her in general.

Mrs. Kingsworth felt a little rebuked, she hardly knew why.

"Every one is called to some duty," she said, "I meant the strict fulfilment of that. It is a call to arms."

There was a slight ring in the mother's voice that might have seemed more proper to the girl, but then, much as such a view would have astonished Kate, the old Canon was wont to say that "Mary had kept herself shut up till she was just as romantic as a girl of eighteen." Perhaps her highmindedness with all its defects had kept her heart young. She went on, her eyes kindling.

"Each soldier has his post, it is dishonour to desert it; we have a post in life, a special duty, if we shrink from it we are deserters, *cowards*, while the sense that we are at our guard is quite enough to atone for any amount

of dulness as you call it, or, I should say, for any sacrifice."

Kate made no answer, she was conscious of no such glow of self-satisfaction.

"But we cannot fight each other's battles," continued Mrs. Kingsworth, "and sometimes a good soldier has to see the breach that *he* would have given his life to defend left open by another."

She spoke in her usual concentrated earnest manner, and Kate having now the clue to these utterances was seized with a sudden impulse of impatience, and forgot her own determination not to commit herself, and the Canon's advice to use her own unbiassed judgment.

"I am sure, mamma," she said, hastily, "if you mean that you want me very much to give up Kingsworth, I don't care a fig about it. I had much rather be quit of it *now*, and go away and have an easy mind to enjoy myself. I'm sure I wish it was buried in the sea!"

Mrs. Kingsworth could hardly believe her ears, she started from her seat, with fleeting colour and throbbing heart. Could it be that the burden of years would be let slip at last?

"Kate, you mean it!" she said, breathlessly.

"Yes," said Katharine, with the petulant languor of her fretted spirits. "I don't care about it, I had much rather not have all the trouble of looking after the poor people."

"You mean that you will make restitution—give it back to Emberance?"

"I'm sure I would if there was an end of all the bother about it!"

Mrs. Kingsworth sat down again in silence. Was it true? was it possible? Was her long purpose coming to its fulfilment? Was the desire of her life fulfilled at last? Would she really soon lie down to sleep and feel that the burden had rolled away, that the great deed was done?

Katharine sat pulling at a knot in her silk. She was a little flushed and frowning, but not looking much as if she had come to the crucial moment of her life.

"You see it all now?" said her mother.

"I don't know—I had much rather get rid of it all. That is, if it isn't wrong."

"Wrong?"

Kate was silent; she knew quite well that in yielding to her impatience of her mother's hints, to her dread of the associations of her brief love story, and to the general weariness of her unsatisfactory life, she had acted entirely against the spirit of her uncle's letter, and had relapsed into the childish love of ease and submission to her mother's ascendancy, out of which she had been dimly struggling.

"There is no use in my saying anything till I'm twenty-one," she said.

"But you will not retract, Katharine, you will not fall again into temptation? Give me your promise—surely I may ask for that now."

"No, mamma," said Kate, "I won't promise. I'd rather get rid of it, a great deal, especially if you promise me not to go back to Applehurst. But all the same, I had better not promise, for that would be the

same thing as doing it now. I'll wait till I'm one-and-twenty."

"But you wish *now* to restore it?"

"Oh yes, I'm sure it has been no good to me," said Kate, and gathering up her work, she left the room.

Then Mrs. Kingsworth rose and walked about, too restless to sit still. How often had she pictured to herself the bliss of this moment, the finding herself at one with her daughter, the cessation of the perpetual doubt of the girl's worthiness, the joy of the united act of restitution, the peace of the ill-gotten wealth laid down. And now was it the newness of the relief, or what? she could not be sensible of this unwonted rapture, nor realise that Katharine was not a disappointment.

As for Katharine, she felt rather self-reproachful, and conscious of having acted in a fit of impatience, conscious too that a trifle might make her think and feel differently. Neither lady realised that the carrying out of the plan would involve considerable delay and difficulty. Katharine thought that she had only to tell her uncle the resolution she had come to, and then pack up her things and leave Emberance in possession; while Mrs. Kingsworth had thought so much more of Katharine being willing to make restitution than of the restitution itself that she had thought very little of the process.

The projected visit to Fanchester did not however take place till March, for Mrs. Kingsworth caught cold just before they had intended to start, and for the first time within Kate's recollection was confined to her room for some weeks, and though not ill enough to cause any

alarm, was sufficiently so to be unable to take a journey in the winter. She did not care very much for Kate's attendance, and the girl was left more to herself than had ever been the case before. Major Clare did not reappear, and though she walked out with the girls at the Vicarage and saw a good deal of them, there was a check on the fervour of her friendship for them.

She was just as idle, just as often dull, just as eager for a bit of gaiety it seemed as ever, no worthier a creature so far as her mother could see than before she had resolved on the act of reparation.

And yet, under all the surface of vexation and weariness, and balked desire of a pleasanter life, there was a tiny bit of self-respect in Kate's heart that had not been there formerly.

She had followed her poor little fluctuating uncertain conscience at the most critical moment of her life, she *had* done the best she knew. She had been open and honest, and she would have been a worse girl if she had stifled her instinct of telling Major Clare the truth, though she fancied now that she would have been a much happier one.

But this her mother could not know, and as Katharine did not try much to conquer and did not succeed at all in concealing her discontent and impatience, she was not likely to find it out.



CHAPTER XV.

LOVE LANE.

EMBERANCE, meanwhile, had been welcomed home with great warmth by her mother and aunt, who had both missed her cheerful young presence, and set herself energetically to take up all her broken threads, and resume the little duties that had been interrupted by her long visit. Emberance taught at a Sunday-school, and helped to manage a lending library, and a working party, besides ruling despotically over the caps and other ornaments of her mother and aunt, and being a leading spirit at a choral class in the neighbourhood.

She felt dull when she first came back; but she had too much sense and too much management of herself to fret and dawdle like poor Kate; there was no use, she thought, in thinking *more* of Malcolm than could be helped.

Her mother was disappointed at finding her so unaltered. She had vaguely hoped that "something might happen" to her daughter during her long absence, and when she could not gather that Emberance had received

any offers, and seemed to take up her old life just where she left it, she hazarded a hint.

"At any rate, Emberance, I suppose the society you met at Kingsworth was very superior to the Fanchester set,—of course excepting the cathedral."

"Well, yes,—in some ways perhaps; but we went out very little."

"I dare say the young men were of a different stamp from any you could meet here?"

"They were more in the style of Mr. Mackenzie," said Emberance with a flush, which was a literal falsehood, however true in spirit; for neither Walter Kingsworth, nor Major Clare, nor Alfred Deane were at all in the style of her grave young Scot.

"Ah, you might forget that romance, for young Mackenzie is never likely to do much—"

"How do you know, mother,—have you heard?" cried Emberance eagerly.

"Yes, his aunt was telling me the other day that he found it a bad speculation,—more capital was required than *he* could ever hope for."

Emberance said nothing. She believed that the report was made the worst of for her benefit, and she did not think her Malcolm would give in so easily; but it cost her some hot stinging tears.

Oh, why—why did things go so ill with her? She wished most heartily that she was by Malcolm's side, scrubbing the floor and cooking the dinner, while he felled trees and drove up cattle. She knew that she could have borne anything cheerfully then, but to wait

and have her life spoiled, and no hope of sharing his —Emberance cried and chafed, and, for the first time, wished that she was heiress of Kingsworth. What good was the place to Kitty?

Emberance however rebuked herself for these thoughts by reflecting how wicked Malcolm would have thought them. Nor had she nearly so much time as Kate to indulge in sorrowful musings; for besides all her ordinary business, the Canon had her a good deal at his house, and, as her mother expressed it, "took very gratifying notice of her."

She had originally met Malcolm Mackenzie at the house of his uncle, who was the principal doctor in Fanchester, and scraps of intelligence of a kind that was not very reassuring reached her from this source. Malcolm had arrived, and had written, but could not say that he saw his way much yet. He was afraid his little capital would not go very far,—still it was early days to despond, and he hoped for the best. If one thing failed, he should try another. Emberance knew that these discouraging facts were purposely brought to the hearing of the penniless girl with whom Malcolm had foolishly entangled himself. She felt miserable, and tried to distract her mind by enjoying to the utmost all her little gaieties; with the result of causing Mrs. Mackenzie to write to her nephew that "Emberance Kingsworth was looking particularly well, and was much admired. She was a bit of a fine lady, and more than a bit of a flirt. It is very well for you, my dear boy, that there is no real engagement, —a most unfit girl for a settler's wife." And this assur-

ance in more complimentary forms met Emberance very often.

She had been out one day for a walk with some of her girl friends, and coming back with them just at dusk, with the intention of giving them a cup of tea, she found the household in rather an unusual state of excitement.

"Well, Emmy," her mother said, "it is a great pity that you were out. A friend of yours has been here to see you."

"A friend of mine?" said Emberance, as she inquired into the state of the teapot. "Oh, Lily Wood, I suppose, she was coming to stay with her aunt."

"No, my dear," said Miss Bury, "one of your friends from Kingsworth."

"Not Katie come already? I can't guess, mamma; I hate guessing."

"Well, my dear, it was Major Clare. He said that he was going to return shortly to his brother's, and would be glad to take any message or parcel for you. A most agreeable person."

There was a kind of consciousness in her mother's manner which annoyed Emberance extremely. She was greatly surprised at Major Clare's visit, and set it down to a possible desire to reopen relations with Katharine.

"I dare say he might like to have a message to take to Kingsworth," she said in a tone intended to convey to her friends and to her mother that his interest was in another direction. "Where is he staying?" she added; "how did he come here?"

"He was staying, he said, in the neighbourhood, and would call again. Such pleasing manners!"

The Major had evidently created a favourable impression, and Emberance could not help being secretly flattered that he had sought her out, even with a view to renew his relations with Katharine.

The Major did call again, and Emberance also met him at Canon Kingsworth's. He was very agreeable, and said very little about Kate, rather renewing that sort of manner which in the early days of Kingsworth had made Emberance doubt of his real intentions. She perceived that all her relations, including the Canon, regarded his appearance as significant; and indeed that excellent old gentleman would probably not have regarded a young lady's change of mind towards a not very eligible suitor as a matter of great regret. And Emberance knew herself to be charming, the Major confirmed in her that sweet sense of the power of attraction, which is more intoxicating to a girl than the knowledge of beauty or any other personal advantage. It would take too long to tell all the little incidents, all the words, and half the glances that carried a vain man a little further than he had intended, and went far to turn the head of a vain girl.

Emberance looked prettier and took more trouble with her dress than usual during this important fortnight. But if she had a vain head she had an honest heart, and Major Clare's former attentions to Katharine could not be forgotten. It was flattering to be preferred to her heiress-cousin; but still he had won Kate's affections

first, and Emberance never really contemplated his urging any serious suit upon her. Only *it was pleasant to be known as the object of his attentions.*

"I am a foolish, *horrid* girl," thought Emberance, "and it is a mean thing to care about, but that's all, and I am sure they are all mistaken in fancying he has any serious intentions. Besides, as if I would listen to any one but Malcolm. I never, never will."

She was walking by herself home from the High Street, where she had gone to buy some little bit of finery, and down the lane that led by a short cut to the suburban district where she lived. It was only a dull lane, narrow and dirty, with a wall on one side and a close-clipped hedge on the other; but Emberance always chose it because it was here that she and Malcolm had met on the day when he had told her of his love and of his poverty, and asked her if she could bear to wait while he made his home, if she could put up with the weariness and the waiting that fell to the lot of a poor man's betrothed.

"Oh, I can!" Emberance had answered warmly, and Love Lane or Hatchard's Lane, as it was called, according to the tastes of the speaker, always brought her promise to her mind. She stopped a minute in her walk, and looked over the hedge across the cabbages in Hatchard's market garden, and said to herself,

"I'm not bearing it, I'm trying to escape it. I am giving in just as mother always said I should. And all because I like to feel that a man like Major Clare

admires me. And I can't even *tell* Malcolm that I am sorry."

Tears filled her eyes and dimmed the long rows of cabbages. Emberance said a little prayer to herself, and made up her mind. She would stick to her true love and to her true self. Not bound indeed! Did not her conscience bind her?

"Ah, Miss Kingsworth, good morning. I am just coming from your house. Mrs. Kingsworth gave me a hope of meeting you."

Emberance turned with a violent blush to see Major Clare standing beside her.

"Is this a favourite walk of yours?" he said as she gave him a confused greeting.

"Yes," said Emberance, "it is."

"From a fine sense of natural beauty?" said Major Clare, lightly.

"No," said Emberance, as bluntly as Kate could have spoken. "It's not pretty. But I don't care about that."

"Indeed, there are times when outward beauty makes very little difference to us!"

"Yes," said Emberance, "but it would not do for *me* to think very much about places being pretty,—or particularly comfortable, because,—because I'm not likely to live in pretty or comfortable places."

"Why, how so?" said Major Clare, surprised.

"Because," said Emberance, looking straight before her, "a girl who hopes to be a settler's wife mustn't care about comforts. I am engaged to be married, Major

Clare. I—*I* prefer to tell my friends about it, but mother would rather nothing was said, as we expect to wait for a long time first. But my uncle knows it, and Katharine."

She made her little speech in a ladylike and dignified manner, though her face was crimson, and she wished that the old wall would tumble down and hide her.

Of course her motive in the confidence could not but be apparent enough, hard as she had tried to hide it; and Major Clare felt a pang of intense vexation as he felt that a second time his tale had been stopped before it was uttered. But he kept his counsel.

"Indeed! allow me to congratulate you," he said lightly. "You have kept your secret well, Miss Kingsworth; no one would have guessed it."

"I was desired to keep it," said Emberance, ashamed. "Please do not mention it in Fanchester."

"Of course," said Major Clare, "I feel your confidence an honour,—most undeserved, I am sure, and unexpected."

Emberance hated the Major more intensely as they walked down the remaining bit of Love Lane together than she had ever hated any one in her life. He had carried off the rebuff cleverly, and had stung her too keenly to allow her to perceive that he was stung also.

They wished each other good morning cheerfully and courteously, and parted at the lane's end. Emberance hurried home feeling rather small and foolish; but with a sense of relief predominating. She was duly asked

if she had met the Major, and after a little preamble her mother said,

"It is very pleasant to meet any one who is so discriminating. He is well acquainted with all our family history, and takes a very proper view of it."

"Mamma, what have you been saying to him?" cried Emberance vehemently and rather disrespectfully.

"Nothing, I assure you, that he did not know before. He only expressed his sympathy with us, and said that your unconsciousness of any wrong couldn't hide how well you were fitted—in short, one couldn't help seeing that he thought you would make a much better heiress than Kate."

Emberance stood for a moment with her hat in her hand.

"Then," she said, with much emphasis, "he is worse than any villain in a book."

She walked away without further explanation, and Major Clare vanished from the lives of Emberance and Katharine Kingsworth.

He returned to India still unmarried,—still faithful, his brother said, to his first love. And perhaps he was so, but his efforts to replace her, and his love of producing an impression had made a crisis in the life and in the character of the two Kingsworth cousins.



CHAPTER XVI.

COUSINS.

IN the early spring Kate and her mother came to Fanchester to pay the Canon a long visit, after which their plans were uncertain; Kate wanted to go abroad, and Mrs. Kingsworth had a great longing for a few quiet weeks at Applehurst. "But," thought Kate, "once there we shall never get out again."

She was a good deal more like other young ladies than at the time of her former visit, and no longer went into ecstasies over kid gloves and evening parties, she was also less abrupt in manner, and had learned from Emberance to occupy herself with ordinary girlish pursuits, so that she seemed less idle. She was prettier too, and less exuberantly youthful.

On the very evening of their arrival Mrs. Kingsworth sought a private interview with the Canon, and told him how Katharine had volunteered her willingness to give up the estate; but had declined to give a definite promise that she would do so.

"It was a great relief to me—a very great relief," Mrs.

Kingsworth said, rather as if the relief had been difficult to realise.

"So," said the old Canon, "Kate comes of age, does she not, next January? Mrs. James will enjoy reigning at Kingsworth, eh, Mary?"

"You do not think I care for that!" said Mary indignantly, and with rising colour. "It is *nothing* to me what becomes of it. Indeed I believe Emberance is much better without it."

"She might sell it," suggested the Canon.

"She might, but I suppose you would all think that wrong," said Mrs. Kingsworth; "you would not think it wise to speak to Katie?"

"Well, yes. I think, on a favourable opportunity, I will," said the Canon; but he made no promises as to what he would say to her.

He observed with pleasure the warmth of the greeting between the cousins, and contrived that Kate should be allowed to go and spend the day with her aunt.

It was not till she had been more than a week at Fanchester, that he entered on the subject; when he took her into his handsome library, full of dignified and learned literature, and comfortable as befitted the age and position of its owner. He politely recommended to her a great chair, which would have been nearly large enough for her to sleep in. Katharine perched herself upon the edge of it, and took the sleek and solemn tabby cat, who shared the Canon's learned repose, on her knee.

"Uncle, why do you call this cat Archibald?" she said.

"Why, my dear, when he was a kitten, now some years ago, your aunt tied a bell round his neck; and by one of those changes which make the history of nicknames very interesting and curious, the name which should properly have belonged to her was applied to the cat himself. And Archibald he remains. Perhaps he will allow you to call him Archie."

"I should not think of taking such a liberty. He is so dignified and thinks so well of himself! I wonder what he would say to Emmy's white kitten. Isn't Aunt Ellen's a pretty house? I think it must be *so* cheerful to live in a row of villas!"

"Your expectations of Kingsworth have been a little disappointed, I fancy."

Katharine coloured deeply.

"No," she said with some reserve. "I like Kingsworth well enough, much better than Applehurst; but I should like living anywhere else just as well."

"You do not find yourself growing attached to it?"

"N—o," said Kate, "I don't think I do. I suppose mamma has been talking to you," she added. "I do not mind giving up Kingsworth, there would be no more trouble about it then."

"My dear," said the Canon, "you do not quite know what you are talking about. It is true that you will be well provided for in any case by your mother's fortune and Kingsworth does not make you a great heiress; but it gives you a position of which you will think more at twenty-five than at twenty-one, and more again at thirty. No doubt it will bring you trouble and

sponsibility; but dread of these is not the reason which weighs with your mother."

"Uncle Kingsworth," said Kate frankly, though with some confusion, "I don't see how I shall know better what to do when I am twenty-one than I do now. I wish to do right, and it can't be wrong to obey mamma and do what she wishes. I do not feel as she does, I don't think we understand enough about it to feel sure that Kingsworth should be Emberance's, and—Cousin Walter Kingsworth said *he* should give it up in my place."

"He did—did he? When did he have the chance of expressing an opinion?"

"I thought, being a cousin, I might ask him, and I supposed he would know."

"Then, my dear, if your mother wishes it, and a person whom you trust approves of it, and you do not feel the sacrifice beyond your powers, what holds you back?"

Katharine hesitated, her brow contracted and an expression of strained attention came into her eyes. She could hardly grasp her own thought, to express it was still more difficult.

"You said, I must judge for my own self," she said.

"And your own judgment is different."

"Uncle," said Kate with a trembling voice, "I *have* thought and considered, and I have tried not to be childish. I should like, oh so much! to get rid of it, and be like other girls; but—but it seems to have been put on me to—to—make up for papa. And when there is

no other reason *clear* except the trouble of it, oh, uncle! I should not *really* be what mamma calls worthy if I gave it up, and told every one my father did wrong, when perhaps he did not. That's my *own* judgment, uncle, my *own* conscience, but—but—I wish—I wish I did not feel so, with all my heart."

"Then, my dear child, your own conscience is the light that you must follow. You are a good girl, Kate, and your mother's own daughter after all. Keep your principle, even if in the future you change your conclusion. Let nothing tempt you to do what you think *may* be wrong, and in the end no doubt you will arrive at a right decision."

Katharine sighed, her uncle had not helped her to get rid of her responsibilities; but she was pleased by his appreciation of her motives, and in her heart knew that he was right. She liked, too, being at Fanchester, and even her mother, whose habit of seclusion had been broken, was much happier than on the former occasion, and suffered less from the shyness of which at her years and in her position, she was so exceedingly ashamed. The Canon also invited Walter Kingsworth and one of his sisters to come and pay him a visit; and the elder branch of the family must have been very anxious to renew intercourse with the younger; for not only did business offer no impediment to Walter's acceptance of the invitation, but his father came down with them to Fanchester and paid his respects to his old cousin the Canon, to whom he bore a sufficiently strong likeness to delight the younger ones, who all fell into a fervour of family feeling,

and traced their pedigrees, and discovered their common ancestors, with the greatest delight. Kate began to respect Kingsworth much more seriously. Eva, the North-country cousin, was clever and romantic, and actually concocted a copy of verses, on a certain Walter who had been engaged in a Jacobite plot, and had gone to prison sooner than reveal the hiding-place of his fellow-conspirators, which verses ended with an aspiration that they might all be worthy of their heroic ancestor. Katharine, full of excitement, seized on the poem, and rushed to her mother, to expatiate on Eva's wonderful talents, and to tell the story of the high-minded Walter. Mrs. Kingsworth listened with an odd sort of smile, and presently unlocked a box which had been sent for from Applehurst, to search for some missing business papers, took out an old sketch-book, and displayed a pen-and-ink drawing of a cavalier, with a Kingsworth nose, submitting to be handcuffed by some very truculent looking soldiers in cocked-hats and pig-tails.

"Mamma! did *you* draw that? You! Did you know about our ancestor?" cried Kate, open-mouthed.

"Oh yes, my dear, I was very fond of drawing when I was young. I was glad to marry into a family with a hero in it," she added half to herself.

"Let me show it to Eva! Why, *she* drew a picture of Richard Cœur-de-Lion in prison!"

Eva duly admired the drawing, and showed her own; and behold there was a crack in the ice. The new games, introduced by the Silthorpe cousins, in which drawing, verse-making, and odds and ends of knowledge

came into play, proved old ones to Mrs. Kingsworth. She was drawn into the circle of young people, and became a leading spirit; with twice as many ideas as Emberance, and four times as much faculty as Kate, she could laugh and argue and hold her own amid the merry clatter, and when Kate listened amazed she recollected that an attempt to teach her some of these little amusements had been scouted as "making play into lessons." How handsome her mother looked as she puzzled them all or triumphantly penetrated their puzzles.

"Take my word for it, my dear fellow," said Mr. Kingsworth to his son, on one occasion, "Mrs. George Kingsworth is worth all the young ladies together."

Of course Walter took the line of laughing at the heroism and crying down the heroes; but he by no means avoided either the games or the discussions, and Kate and he became more and more friendly and cousinly, till she began to derive opinions from him and think they were her own, while Major Clare was driven into a very small corner of her mind indeed. She soon learned to take a proper interest in the cathedral, and would have been very much surprised to be reminded of her original preference for a shop.

It was impossible that she should forget her former attempt at consulting Walter, and though he avoided the subject, her perceptions were not acute enough to discover this. One afternoon as they walked up and down the Canon's garden, admiring the spring green of the trees against the grey walls that shut them in, she said,

"I have thought about Kingsworth every day since

that time last year; but I cannot decide the matter yet."

"I wish Kingsworth did not belong to you, Katharine, that you had no concern with it," said Walter, abruptly.

"Ah—why? You think—it ought not to belong to me?"

"No, no," he said, hurriedly. "I do not think that."

"Of course," said Kate, "it is all wrong any way. Sir Walter and all our ancestors would be dreadfully grieved that it should not be inherited by the rightful heir."

"If Emberance—"

"But I don't mean Emberance," interposed Kate. "I mean *you*. You are our ancestor's heir. What would they say to the place coming to a girl like me, or to Emmy either?"

"That is romantic nonsense," said Walter almost fiercely, and colouring to his hair roots, "I have no more to do with it than I have with Mayford, than I have with the deanery of Fanchester. I wish there was no such place, I wish the sea would swallow it up, it's a—a stumbling-block, and an incumbrance. I wish it was in South Africa!"

"Dear me, Walter," said Kate, "I don't see why you should hate it so. I don't care about it much myself; but I have liked it better since I heard about our ancestors, it seems more worth while to do right about it. I know *you* think I ought to give it to Emberance."

"I wish—I wish—I can't advise you, Kate, I—I—There's Eva—isn't it tea-time?"

He turned away and left her abruptly: while she, surprised at his manner, began to seek for some explanation of it. Why should he hate Kingsworth? Why should he refuse to tell her what he thought to be her duty? Kate did not hit even in a guess on the right explanation; her frank pleasant intercourse with Walter was so unlike her past experience of any one's attentions, but it did occur to her that he might possibly admire Emberance. Kate did not like the notion, it made her uncomfortable, yet it inclined her more to the sacrifice than anything which had yet passed. If Emmy had it, and married Walter, how right, according to all principles, everything would come. The real old head of the family, and the rightful heiress would reign, while she having had her day and her disappointment, would act the beneficent genius and—retire.

But then, Emberance had another love, and—and "I don't think," said honest Kate to herself, "that I *do* feel quite like having had my day. I was *very* young, and—I believe I shall get over it! I—I think I have!"

But Mrs. Kingsworth, from the drawing-room window, had watched the pair strolling up and down, and a new idea occurred to her that fell like a cold chill on her reviving interests. If this pleasant, clever, well-bred young man, was, after all, not disinterested. If he had an eye to Kate and to Kingsworth, how completely her daughter's wavering mind would be set in the wrong direction, how right it would all be made to seem while justice was as far as ever from being done.

"I ought to go out and join them," she thought, and

then she wavered, afraid of raising a suspicion, and feeling awkward and doubtful.

"Oh dear! I'm not fit to be any girl's mother," she thought, despairingly. "Well, now they have parted, and Walter is coming in."

Walter came up stairs and into the drawing-room—he took up a book and threw it down again—read the paper upside down, and fidgeted about the room; while she could not think of a word to say to him. Suddenly he came towards her, and threw himself into a chair near the sofa where she was sitting.

"Mrs. Kingsworth! I—I have made up my mind to confide in you. I am in a great perplexity. I—I love your daughter, most—most thoroughly—but the circumstances, how can I—I of all men—appear before her in the light of a fortune-hunter? Kingsworth raises a barrier between us. Yet I cannot, there are reasons, insuperable reasons, why *I* cannot persuade her to deprive herself of it. I—I must go away from her till her birthday is past, and she has decided without me. I—you are so sincere a person that I feel sure you will recognise my sincerity."

Mrs. Kingsworth, in spite of her momentary suspicions, was utterly taken by surprise at finding them so quickly realised.

"Katharine?" she said, "but since when, have you learnt so to regard her?"

"Since when? Since the first moment I saw her, since I saw her confidence and simplicity, her—herself! I am well aware," he added, restraining himself and

speaking in a different tone, "that under *any* circumstances, even without Kingsworth, Katharine's claims are high, but my father is a rich man and liberal; I think I could have ventured to address her on something like equal terms, but for Kingsworth."

"What is your view about Kingsworth?" said Mrs. Kingsworth abruptly. "What is your opinion as to Kate's duty?"

"To you perhaps I may say, that I would not keep it with a doubtful right. It would make me uncomfortable. But there is no such clear distinction of right and wrong in the matter as to justify any one in urging such a view on her. I would give much that Emberance had inherited it, and that I could have met Katharine under other circumstances. But now," he added, "I want your advice, if you will give me any."

"I should like Katharine to marry you," said Mrs. Kingsworth abruptly. "I do not think you care for Kingsworth. If she gives it up, I think you would make her happy. But you know it is no great fortune, it would hardly justify a *man* in living without a profession."

"Oh no," said Walter hastily, and blushing vividly. "I am aware of that. But it is—a desirable possession."

"If it were a diamond ring, or a kingdom, I should feel the same about it!" said Mrs. Kingsworth. "It has come to us through ill-doing."

"But—what shall I do? I cannot urge her to yield what she may afterwards learn the value of, and—it is a question on which I cannot enter. Besides, she—she is entirely indifferent and unconscious; it would take time

to win her, if ever I could. Have I a chance? What is my best hope?"

He looked very wistful and melancholy, having evidently for the moment forgotten Kingsworth in Katharine.

Mrs. Kingsworth looked interested and perplexed. "I do not know," she said, "I do not know Katharine's feelings. I think she is fond of you; but, sometimes I have doubted her having much power of attachment."

"Why—she is full of feeling!" exclaimed the lover indignantly.

"Is she? I think she puzzles me. But I do see that she must be left to her own decision. Perhaps," she added with an odd sort of dignity, "we had better renew this conversation after she is of age, and till then, let things go on as usual."

"It is perhaps the best way," said Walter. "Then you do not send me away, till next week, till my visit is over."

"No, I do not see why I should. And you know she has *almost* promised me to decide as we wish."

Walter was more grateful for the unconscious evidence of trust shown in that "we," than for a thousand protestations. Mrs. Kingsworth continued after a little pause, "and probably, if her feelings are in your favour, your view will unconsciously influence her."

Walter could hardly help a smile at the musing simplicity of the tone; but he gratefully thanked Mrs. Kingsworth for her confidence, and stayed. His father, after a long talk with the Canon, went home the next day, making a *détour* to look at Kingsworth as he went.

CHAPTER XVII.

A NEW MOTIVE.

"WHY, Emmy! what is the matter? You look as if you were unhappy," said Katharine, with all her usual frankness.

Emberance had come to spend the day in the Close, and when Kate had gone with her up stairs to take off her hat, the absence of her usual liveliness and the heavy look of her pretty eyes had prompted this abrupt inquiry.

"Well, I am rather unhappy; things go very wrong!" and Emberance after a momentary struggle for cheerfulness, broke down into tears. Katharine hugged her, and tried to comfort her.

"I suppose— Is it about your—that one who *didn't mind*, you know, Emberance?" she said bashfully. "You only told me a little about it then."

"I was forbidden to tell," said Emberance, "but everything is altered now, and I will tell you all about it. You know I shall be of age on the ninth of June, and then I hoped that mamma would have consented to

acknowledge the engagement, and that Malcolm and I might write to each other. Indeed, she consented to his writing when I was of age and re-stating his prospects. But—last mail, his aunt, Mrs. Mackenzie, heard from him, and he had received very bad news. The bank, in which all his little property was invested, had failed, so instead of being able next year to buy a place and go into partnership with his cousins in New Zealand as he hoped, there is nothing for it but to work on for such pay as he can get, and it may be years and years before there is any chance for us. Mother promised to allow the engagement when I came of age, and the marriage as soon as the partnership proved successful. But now it is all over,—and oh dear, I—I do want to see him so much!"

"But you don't mind his being poor," said Kate eagerly.

"No, no! I shall be true and faithful for ever and ever. But he wrote that I must be told, for when he asked me, he had fair prospects, and now he has none,—and there is no tie between us, he shall not think me faithless if I give him up. Oh, I wish we had been married first and lost the money afterwards. Now I shall never know where he is—and it just means that all chance is over."

"If you could only go out and surprise him," said Kate.

"Oh, that is folly! If he can't keep himself he can't keep me. And mamma would not consent—so how could I get there? Oh, dear, the years are so long, and

he will be so disappointed. It is so far away!" sobbed Emberance incoherently, feeling, poor girl, that the trial demanded of her was almost more than she was capable of enduring.

Katharine stood silent, with her hand on Emberance's shoulder. Her bright colour paled a little, and the sudden thought that came into her mind did not as usual find its way at once to her lips.

Here was the motive power, here the proof that the old wrong *was* working mischief, and that "even between two girls" it *did* signify which was the rich one. That which as her mother put it had seemed an abstraction and a dream, suddenly faced her as a reality of life. Suddenly she felt how she *might* have been regarded by Emberance, and how pure and free and kind had been the love which Emberance had actually shown her.

"Don't cry," she said, "perhaps something will happen yet. And, Emmy, any way you will always know that you hadn't any money when Mr. Mackenzie loved you first."

"Ah, no, but money *does* make things possible. I don't love him less because he is poor. You don't know life, Kitty."

"Don't I? You'll never have to think he loved you because you were rich," said Kate gravely.

"Oh, there is the quarter striking! I am not fit to be seen," said Emberance, starting up.

"Well, stay here for a bit. I am going to speak to mamma," said Kate, leaving her.

She had quite made up her mind. All at once the

spur had been given; but as she paused outside her mother's door, she leant back against the wall with a sudden awful sense of the irrevocable. She was going to burn her ships, going to give her word, and for the first time she was frightened at the sense of what her word could do, not merely worried and puzzled, but awe-struck, suddenly conscious of all the importance of her decision. And with a strange self-revelation, suddenly she knew that she *did* care for Kingsworth, that she should care for it always, that it was in her to love it and to honour it as Emberance never would, that she need not be silly and frivolous and full of her own pleasures, but such as the heiress of Kingsworth should be.

So it was not in childish weary impatience, not even with a sudden rush of impetuous feeling, but with a sense of awe and resolution that she opened her mother's door and went into her room.

Mrs. Kingsworth was writing a note, and Katharine, as she came in and stood behind her recalled the day when she had vehemently entreated for a little pleasure, a little amusement, a little widening in her narrow life—life looked large enough to her eyes now.

"Mamma," she said, and something in her voice made her mother turn round with—for once—a natural maternal thought,—Was it Walter? "Mamma, I give you my promise, I will give up Kingsworth to Emberance."

"Katharine!"

"I want to tell you," said Kate, standing away from her, and speaking fast, "I see myself now, that the arrangement being wrong makes a real difference. I

thought, that while we were not *quite* sure we ought to believe in my father."

"Kate, I *am* sure," said Mrs. Kingsworth. "Doubts are only a pretence."

"I thought," pursued Katharine, "that—that it didn't matter to either of us. But it does. Emmy is very unhappy; she is engaged to Mr. Mackenzie; and he has no money now, so Aunt Ellen forbids her even to write to him. But if she has Kingsworth it will all come right. So I do see that it is wrong for me to keep Kingsworth. I cannot—now I know she *wants* to be rich—I mean, now I know that her life is spoilt because she is poor."

"My dear, dear child!" Mrs. Kingsworth took her in her arms and kissed her fondly; but even she felt startled and awestruck. "I was sure that you would wake up to the sense of the wrong," she said softly.

"I couldn't let Emberance be unhappy, if I could help it," said Katharine.

"As to that," replied her mother, "I cannot judge. Her engagement may or may not be desirable. Probably neither she nor her mother are quite fitted for the position. But be that as it may, *you* will be free from blame."

"But it is to make her happy that I do it," said Kate. "When I see that being poor makes her miserable it makes the wrong-doing seem alive and real instead of dead and done for. However, mamma, I have settled it, and promised, so you won't have to be unhappy any more. Perhaps I ought to have minded more about that," she added, more meekly than usual.

"No, no, Katie, my feelings were no motive to urge you. I, I shall be very thankful soon."

Katharine turned away, and went back to Emberance, who was bathing her eyes and smoothing her hair, only anxious to obliterate the traces of her late agitation.

"Emmy," said Kate, suddenly, "there is no need for you to be unhappy any more. Kingsworth ought to be yours, you know, and as soon as I am of age you will have it."

Emberance, before whom the matter had of course never been discussed, and who was quite ignorant of Mrs. Kingsworth's long cherished hope, and of all Kate's recent perplexities, turned round and stared at her in utter amaze.

"Why, Kate, are you crazy?" she exclaimed.

"Not at all. Mamma thinks it is yours, and so does Aunt Ellen, and Uncle Kingsworth said I was to make up my own mind. So I have made it up, and now you will have enough money to do whatever you please. Oh, Emmy, I wouldn't keep it and leave you to want it, for all the world."

"I won't agree to such a thing," cried Emberance, bursting into another flood of tears. "Nothing will persuade me! It is perfectly ridiculous! I hate rights and wrongs. You don't know what you are saying."

"Oh, yes, I do."

"I never—never thought of such a thing! I was never jealous of you, Katie,—I always said it was nonsense. I won't hear of it. There's a law against it. When people have a thing for seven years it is theirs whoever comes back. People are dead after seven years,

you can marry somebody else even ?" cried Emberance, incoherently.

"Yes," said Kate, "it is mine, I know, so I can give it away if I like. I am going to tell Uncle Kingsworth."

"Katharine ! Katharine !"

But Kate ran down stairs, Emberance pursued her, caught her up as she opened the study door, and got the first word as she flew to her uncle.

"Please, uncle, don't let her do it. Uncle, it is all nonsense; I wouldn't have it for the world."

"Uncle Kingsworth, I *have* decided. I have made up my mind that Emberance must have Kingsworth !"

"Why, girls—why, girls ! what in the world does all this mean ?" exclaimed the astonished Canon, as he turned round and faced his two nieces; both flushed, and one tearful, and each appealing to him at the same moment.

"Oh, uncle, it is all Kate's generosity ! I wouldn't hear of it," cried Emberance.

"It is because I know now that Emberance really wants it, and must be unhappy if she is poor," said Kate.

"And what has brought you to this conclusion ?"

"She is engaged, uncle—"

"Uncle Kingsworth knows," interposed Emberance, with an effort at dignity. "Mr. Mackenzie has lost some money, we have to wait longer than we supposed,—that is all. He can earn his living—and mine—by-and-by."

"But if she was rich, uncle, Aunt Ellen would let them be married at once. I have decided, I see now that the wrong is real. I couldn't keep it—and *she* to be unhappy. Not even if by any chance it *may* be mine."

Canon Kingsworth took a hand of each, and looked from one to the other.

"And what do you suppose I mean to do with my money?" he said. "Do you know that you are my heiresses—my next of kin?"

"No," said Kate, simply.

"Oh, uncle, don't!" said Emberance; but he saw that she had heard the idea suggested.

"And Emberance has something from her mother and aunt."

"But you are all alive," said Kate; "and besides, if it is right—"

"Right? But that is your mother's view, my child. It would be 'right' if Emberance did not need it."

"But her needing it has made me see that it mattered about being right," said Kate gravely.

"I am sure," said Emberance, "that it would be wrong. Grandpapa did not intend my father to have it all—he never did."

"No, Emberance, I don't think he did, and there has always lain my reluctance to your Aunt Mary's plan. But now listen, both of you. Suppose that Katharine, when she comes of age, were to sell Kingsworth, and divide the money equally,—how would that be?"

Emberance evidently was caught by this idea, though she repeated resolutely, "It is Kate's, all of it." While Katharine said,

"Sell Kingsworth,—ought I? When it was bought back?"

"Well, Katharine, it may be a pity; but it is not espe-

cially dear to either of you. It is full of painful memories to your mothers and to me. And, my nieces, having thought much on the vexed question of your rights, I have come to the conclusion that a division is the really equitable plan. You, Katharine, cannot keep it,—you, Emberance, could not take it, without some scruple in your minds. And such an arrangement could be entered into with much less of scandal and publicity than a change between you. Kate would still be a rich woman, and you, Emberance, could fulfil your engagement, if you chose so to bestow yourself, and your portion could make happy the very worthy and disinterested young man, from whom I have just had the pleasure of receiving a letter."

"From Malcolm, uncle? Did he write to you?"

"Yes; to inform me of his loss of fortune. I saw him, you must know, before he sailed, and I feel a high regard for him."

"Oh, uncle,—you will say so to mother,—I am so very—very glad," cried Emberance, clinging to him. "And we can wait. I *will* not mind it."

"Well, Katharine," said the Canon, "does my plan please you?"

"Y—es, yes," said Kate. "But I should have thought, uncle, that *you* wouldn't have considered it respectful to the family."

"Well, my dear, under present circumstances, I think myself justified in waiving that consideration. Bless me —there's the luncheon bell. After all, there is nine months for you to consider your conduct in."



CHAPTER XVIII.

OF AGE.

CANON Kingsworth held a long conversation on the same day with Katharine's mother, in which he endeavoured to win her to his view of the division,—to which she was greatly averse.

"There is no difference in principle," she said, "between the whole or part. None of it should be Kate's."

"Is not your object to heal an old sore,—to make an old wrong right? and will that be so well done by putting Emberance into a place which she on her side could never feel to be indubitably her own,—as by this arrangement which will give her all she needs without imposing on her an intolerable sense of obligation?"

"Oh, let us once be free, and I do not care what she feels about it," said Mrs. Kingsworth vehemently.

"But, apparently, Katharine does."

Mrs. Kingsworth was silent for a moment, then she said, "Emberance has no cause for gratitude or sense of obligation. So far as I am concerned, I have never con-

sidered her in the matter. You think I have been hard towards her."

"No, Mary, I don't say that. Different natures must learn their lessons in a different way. Your sense of honour has enabled you to carry out your purpose of restoration, while Kate's kindly feeling and loving nature has taught her to see that your principles are worth putting in practice. But, my dear Mary, would poor James himself, would any one concerned, find it as hard as you have done to think with charity of your husband's memory?"

"I never have—I know that I never have," said Mrs. Kingsworth, with irrepressible tears. "I cannot forgive him. I could have borne a whole sea of troubles better than the need of despising him,—he disgraced me. But I endeavoured to find the only comfort, and in some measure—I have."

She paused, and then added slowly and with difficulty, "I know that I have made many mistakes in judgment, —I misunderstood Kate. Perhaps—perhaps I have thought too much of my own pride.—I am very slow to perceive myself in fault.—Perhaps George too, if he had lived—I will endeavour to remember how much I myself have fallen short."

"My dear child," said the old Canon, drawing her towards him and kissing her brow.

"Katie has been truly unselfish," she added. "I think—I think she is a good girl, and I am willing to leave her to your guidance in this matter."

And probably no greater self-conquest was achieved in

regard to the whole matter than Mary Kingsworth's in these last words.

She went presently in search of Katharine, who had just returned from a walk with her cousins, during which both she and Emberance had done their best to appear as if nothing particular was occupying their minds. She was in her room taking off her hat as her mother came behind her, and putting her hands on her shoulders, kissed her brow.

"Katie," she said, with unusual gentleness, "I have agreed that it will be better to leave the arrangement to your uncle. And, my dear, I think I have done you injustice. You have been hardly tried, and I should have been more thankful for the aid your affection for Emberance has given you. We shall do better together now."

"Oh, mamma," cried Kate, clinging to her, "I have been a naughty girl, and thought of nothing but enjoying myself. But mamma, if you knew,—I did try once, I *did* tell the truth when it was *very* hard."

"How, my dear?"

"Major Clare, mamma. I told him that perhaps I meant to give it up to Emberance—and then—he never said any more. I thought I must tell him."

"Major Clare! Ah, I have been very unlike a mother. My poor little girl—have you had this to bear? such a cruel form of disappointment."

"I have quite got over it," said Kate seriously; "I was too young, I think, to know my own mind really."

A vivid blush dyed her face, and her eyes, which had

been frankly lifted, dropped as she spoke—as if some new consciousness came over her.

Mrs. Kingsworth lingered, watching her; she thought naturally of Walter and his hopes, and wondered what he would say now the important matter was decided.

But nothing was to be said of it openly, and nothing of course could be done until Katharine came of age in the ensuing January. The hopes which Canon Kingsworth could hold out in his kind and cheering answer to Malcolm Mackenzie's letter were of the vaguest; and Emberance, still insisting that Kate could settle nothing yet, would have no word said to her mother until the deed was actually done. Nor did Walter consider himself justified in trying to gain her promise until the important birthday was passed.

On the 15th of the next January, at Kingsworth itself, Katharine was to make her final decision, and until then, where were she and her mother to go? Kate professed herself quite willing to return to Applehurst; but she had rather not pass the intervening months at Kingsworth, where every one supposed that her birthday would make her entirely mistress. Mr. and Mrs. Kingsworth, of Silthorpe, sent them a very warm invitation to visit them in the North; and it was finally agreed that this should be accepted; after which they would go abroad for two or three months, and spend the autumn and winter at Applehurst.

This programme was faithfully carried out. Kate enjoyed Silthorpe, and saw a great deal of Walter, though she made no further attempt to confide in him. He was

very kind, and planned all sorts of schemes for her pleasure; but she was a little troubled by the sort of distance between them, and spent much time in secretly wondering whether Walter liked her as much as ever, or if her impulsive childishness on their first acquaintance had not repelled him.

On the other hand she made quick strides in friendship with all his family, and liked them better than any people she had ever seen. She carried a sense of unrest and unsettlement abroad with her, the uncomfortable feeling of a crisis in the air, and afterwards, in the slow weeks at Applehurst, her chief feeling was of longing for the deed to be done. Her own desire was that she and her mother should take a house at Fanchester. There would be society and companionship and a life that would be far pleasanter to live than either Applehurst or Kingsworth.

"If you still wish it, after your birthday, Katie," said her mother. "It is not a bad plan."

But no one would help her to lay plans for anything after the fifteenth of January.

"It is like the end of the world. Shall I be anybody at all when to-morrow is over?" she thought to herself as they journeyed towards Kingsworth, whither the Canon and his wife had preceded them by a few days, and where Emberance was to meet them.

It was fine, clear winter weather, frosty and bright. The sea was sparkling in the sunrise when Katharine looked out on it on the morning of her birthday. The blue water, the frosty slopes of the park looked their

best and fairest, as the bells of Kingsworth Church rang out a merry peal in honour of Miss Kingsworth's coming of age. A feeling of unreality came over Kate, it was as if she were going to take a part in a play. She put on her best dress, and went down stairs as the breakfast bell rang. Then there were kisses and congratulations. The Canon gave Kate a pretty necklace, Emberance some girlish piece of handiwork, Rosa and Minnie Clare had sent her a book.

"I forgot to get you a present, Katie," said her mother. "You must choose afterwards."

"Afterwards!" thought Kate. "Then there will be an afterwards."

They sat down to breakfast; the Canon talked politics, and Emberance replied with a manifest sense of the propriety on her part of appearing unconscious of a crisis. Kate spoke now and then. Her mother was absolutely silent.

When the meal was over there was a pause, as if no one quite knew what to do next.

"Well, Katharine," said the Canon, "you are queen of the day, how are we to spend it?"

"I wish," said Kate, "that every one should hear what I want to say. If you please, uncle, come into the drawing-room."

She took the lead, she hardly knew why herself, and as they gathered round the drawing-room fire, she stood a little apart and spoke.

"I wish to sell Kingsworth, and to divide the money that is paid for it with Emberance. I don't think that

it is quite mine or quite hers, and I believe that it is right to divide it, and that it will make us both happier if we do."

Emberance burst into tears as a sort of hush went through the listening circle.

"Have you taken time to consider this resolution?" asked the Canon.

"Yes, nine months."

"And you come to it entirely of your own free will, unbiased by my suggestions or your mother's?"

"Yes, I do. I mean to do it."

Canon Kingsworth took her by the hand and drew her towards him.

"Why?" he said simply, "why do you mean to do it?"

"Because it will make Emberance happy."

"That is hardly sufficient motive," said the Canon, hushing Emberance with a sign.

"Yes," said Kate, "because when she was unhappy for want of it, it showed me that the unfair settlement really set our lives wrong. And perhaps my father would have made it all right in a day or two more, so I do it instead."

"But why do you not give Emberance the whole?"

"Because that would make her feel as uncomfortable about it as I do now, and because she—she *couldn't* live at Kingsworth."

"And shall not you regret this place, which *you* have the means to keep up well? So much of my father's earnings was spent on Kingsworth, that it came as a

barren honour to your grandfather, whose means were still further impoverished afterwards, but your mother's fortune would make you a rich woman with Kingsworth, Kate, a great lady. Shall you not regret it?"

"Yes," said Kate, with perfect straightforwardness, "I shall be rather sorry for it, but not enough to matter."

"She has said her catechism well," said the Canon. "She knows her own mind and her own motives. Now, Katharine, there is one more question you must answer, that no cloud may ever rest on the future. Has your cousin Emberance ever expressed any regret at her own exclusion, shown you any jealousy, or attempted to influence your feelings?"

"Uncle, how dare you ask such a wicked question?" cried Kate, vehemently. "No, no, *no!* Emberance has always loved me. Oh, Emmy, you know you never did," and breaking from her uncle, she ran to Emberance, and threw her arms round her, whispering "Emmy, don't cry, don't cry,—you will be happy now."

"I will speak on my side," cried Emberance, sobbing. "I would rather have cut my tongue out. So would my mother. I love Kate. I only agree because of what you told me, uncle."

"Tut, tut," said the Canon, "the whole point is settled now."

"Except a purchaser," said Katharine's mother. "Will it not be long before we find one?"

"Well," said the Canon, "to tell you the truth I have heard of a possible purchaser,—of a gentleman who would like to have the place if it were in the market."

"Who is it? What is his name?" asked Kate, eagerly.

"Why, he is a gentleman of some fortune, and his name,—I don't think my man of business was very particular about his name. I, of course, could not entertain the proposal, but his name—his name, I think, is James."

"Mr. James,—oh!" said Katharine, "that doesn't sound interesting."

"It is a very good name, my dear," said the Canon, mildly. "Well, then there will be many troublesome legal formalities, but I consider that I have Katharine's permission to put the matter in train."

"Yes, uncle," said Kate, as all being glad to end the interview, there was a general move.

"Canon," said his wife, "I am ashamed of you."

"Well, my dear," said the Canon, "his name *is* James, you know."

The two girls went off together; Kate coaxing Emberance to tell her about Malcolm and to make plans for the future, and Emberance falling into a terror, as the idea struck her that her mother would regard Malcolm with more unfavourable eyes than ever, now she was possessed of this fortune. Still she thought that with the powerful backing up of the Canon this difficulty might be overcome, and in truth her uncle had made it his business to ascertain that the New Zealand cousins were solvent, prosperous persons, and that there would be no undue risk in a connection with them. He would write to Malcolm Mackenzie, and give him leave to bring mat-

ters to a point. All this had been settled with Emberance in a conversation before they left Fanchester, when she had convinced her uncle that Malcolm and New Zealand were and would be her deliberate and unalterable choice. Meanwhile, Mrs. Kingsworth, restless from a sense of relief which she could not realise, and bewildered by the apparent ease with which her long-cherished object had been attained, put on her things, and went out for a walk. A curious desire seized her to look round the place once more, now that it was freed from the sense of wrong-doing, that had made it hateful to her. She had done her best not to look, not to see, when she had been there before; but now she looked about her with an odd sort of curiosity, as she turned her steps for the first time down towards the shore.

"Mamma doesn't like the rocks," Kate had been wont to say, perhaps with a sort of fancy that her mother's age made it natural that she should not care for scrambling. But it was with steps light and active as Katharine's own that Mrs. Kingsworth made her way down to the fatal cove, where she had never been since her husband's death.

She looked round about her with a sense of awe and of compassion for the two young lives that had there been sacrificed, with an earnest endeavour to lay her hard thoughts to sleep, and to forgive if she could never forget the past. Her eyes filled with tears, she thought thankfully of Kate's honest generosity, and resolved to try for a better understanding with her for the future, not to misjudge the natural girlish spirits, which had so long passed away from herself.

Suddenly she became aware that she was not alone, but that a fisherwoman was standing beside her, looking at her keenly.

"If you please, ma'am," the new comer said, "I am Alice Taylor."

"I do not know what you can have to say to me, Alice," said Mrs. Kingsworth, surprised. "Do not think I should bring up again anything that is past and gone."

"I want you to say, ma'am, what made you think as I took they earrings," said Alice, sturdily.

"I do not think I quite remember the details, they were swept out of my memory by the events that followed. Were they not found in the nursery?"

"Yes, ma'am; but it was Eliza put them there. Eliza the housemaid. We quarrelled over a young man, ma'am. *My* husband he is now, and I did not take your earrings. I didn't indeed."

"Well, Alice," said Mrs. Kingsworth after a moment, "if so you have been greatly wronged, and I believe you speak the truth. Would you like me to talk to Mr. Clare about you?"

"Well it's hard to have a bad name, and they earrings stuck by me. But now, ma'am, 'tis I that have something to tell you. When I was sent away that night, I didn't dare go home to father, and I made up my mind I'd get off in the morning to my aunt at Whitecliff. So I waited about on the shore, just here where we stand, ma'am, and all to once I heard voices above over there, and some one called out, 'James, come away, we're close to the cliff. Come away or there'll be an end.' Then I

heard Mr. James' voice, 'Which way? Where are we? Stand still.' And then there was an awful cry and a splash in the water, and I screamed and screeched for help, but no one came, and the fog was too thick to see, and at last I got away round the corner and along the beach to Whitecliff. But I knew what we should hear in the morning."

"Oh, Alice, we would have paid with our heart's blood for your story," cried Mrs. Kingsworth. "Then it was pure accident; they would have saved each other if they could! Oh come, come, tell Canon Kingsworth."

"I was afraid of being took up for the earrings," said Alice, "and frightened and scared out of my wits, and Mr. James was one who had a word for one one day and for another the next,—but now, the tale's worth something, may be, and I'll come."



CHAPTER XIX.

"LADY CLARE."

ALICE Taylor's story, when repeated to the Canon, and sifted as carefully as could be, lifted the weight of vague suspicion off the memories of the two brothers, and at any rate enabled those concerned to believe each innocent of a hand in the other's death. As to the earrings, they had only the woman's own word for her innocence, and her silence seemed to have been accounted for by fright on her own account, and a stupid ignorance of the value of what she had to tell. Whether there had not been in it a dash of revenge for the suspicion, and of anger at the cessation of the careless attentions which James Kingsworth had not been above paying to so pretty a girl, might be doubted, and her subsequent history had not been particularly creditable. She had spoken now simply to gain money, and a small allowance was settled on her, for her tale had indeed lifted a dark cloud from the past. It brought her into much notice, though it had been known in hints to many whom it did not concern before the Kingsworths themselves had

been informed of it. A great talk and excitement was raised in the neighbourhood, people went to visit the cove, and the old story of the Kingsworth succession was in every mouth. Canon Kingsworth took the whole party back to Fanchester, and then wrote to Mr. Clare an authorised version of Mrs. Taylor's confession, and also of the arrangement for the sale of Kingsworth. The truth was thus on record, and the wild stories must subside as they had arisen. Mrs. Kingsworth cared little for them. She had been put in charity with her past, and was ready to be in charity with the present, even with her sister-in-law, who hardly knew how to dispose of her gratitude and sense of former harsh judgments of the heiress and her mother.

So it was "all settled," as Kate said, and desirable houses in Fanchester were inspected. Applehurst was to be let, and Kate talked of belonging to the choral society and of "improving her mind" by attending Shakespeare classes with the other Fanchester young ladies. Nothing unusual was likely to occur to her any more. At last she was "just like other girls."

Why did she feel that being like other girls was a little dull? No answer had yet been received from Malcolm Mackenzie, but Emberance was in all the flutter of expectation of it, and Kate, as she thought of all her past excitements, the lover who had proved no lover, the duty to be done, the crisis that had passed, felt thankful, but a little flat.

It was just a year since the visit of Walter and Eva Kingsworth to Fanchester, which had done so much to

open her eyes, when the Canon announced that he had invited Walter to come and see him again. Kate sparkled up eagerly. Now she could talk to Walter and tell him how it had all been, *now* he could tell her freely what he thought; she was not an ignorant child any more, but a wise, experienced woman, able to recognise the wisdom of his former silence.

And so she told him a day or two after his arrival, as they once more walked up and down the grey-walled garden together, and Kate talked of her difficulties with an impulse of confidence never felt towards any other human being.

"I thought it so hard that you would not speak out plainly to me and tell me what I ought to do, but I see now that it was quite right, I should not have understood."

"It would not have been fair to influence you," said Walter.

"Perhaps not. But now you think I was right? Now, you know that you *can* speak freely."

"Yes, I can speak freely at last!" cried Walter, pausing in his walk. "At last! If you knew the trial of silence. How could I speak to the heiress of Kingsworth or say a word that might not be misconstrued? But now, now, Kate, Kate, your own self—may I not tell you that I love you—you—not your wealth, it is too much still; but you—you. My darling—that is what I want to say."

"I never thought of *that!*" cried Kate abruptly.

"But you will think now; I know you are too innocent to guess."

"No," said Kate, "I was thinking—I thought I liked some one else, but I did not know anything in those days. Now—"

"Now?" said Walter, as he took her hand.

"Now," said Kate, with her old abruptness, but with a new deeper tone in her fresh young voice. "*Now* I know it is you!"

So all *was* settled, and Katharine Kingsworth found her lot at last. The clear honesty which was her best inheritance had guided her through the dangers of her first girlish fancy, and through the perplexities of her decision, and the aim of her mother's life was fulfilled in spite of the mistakes she had made in carrying it out.

"If you had not made Katharine a good girl," the Canon said to her, "she would not have had the chance of her present happiness."

"She *is* a good girl," said Mrs. Kingsworth. "I ought to have found it out sooner."

"Katie," said Walter Kingsworth to his bride on their wedding day, "before we go to Scotland I want to show you a place in which we are both interested. Will you come?"

"Of course I will. Where is it?"

"You shall see."

Kate laughed at the mystery, but after all it mattered little where they went. As they got out of the train at a station unknown to her before, and drove across country several miles, through the ripening cornfields—

"Why, Walter, I have been here before. Why this is Mayford! Is it Kingsworth you mean?"

"Yes, why not Kingsworth?"

"Well, I do not see why you want to see it. And the bells are ringing. Not for us surely?"

"Why not? But perhaps they are practising."

Kate was puzzled.

"Will 'Mr. James' let us in?"

"I think so."

They drove up the wellknown avenue, right up to the door, where familiar figures stood ready to greet them.

"Why, there is your father!"

"Yes, Kate," said Walter, as he lifted his bewildered bride out of the carriage, "this is the place I wanted you to see. Now you know why I could not urge you to part with it, when my father wanted to buy it for a holiday home for us all. Now you know why I could not speak till your mind was clear. But the Canon knew, and Emberance. For you come back to the old home after all, for here it is—and here is—"

"Mr. James!" cried Kate.

"— Kingsworth," said her father-in-law, taking her hand. "Welcome home, Katharine—to Kingsworth."

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